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WITH SILENT FRIENDS

ELEVENTH IMPRESSION.
November, 1918.

With Silent Friends

BY

RICHARD KING

Being extracts from a series of articles which have appeared in "The Tatler," whose permission to reproduce has been kindly given.

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1918

DEDICATED TO
SIR ARTHUR PEARSON, BART., G.C.B.E.
AND TO
THE BLINDED SOLDIERS AND SAILORS
AT ST. DUNSTAN'S

BD
437
H15w

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

RE-READING these extracts from my weekly articles, "WITH SILENT FRIENDS," which have appeared in *The Tatler*, the fact is forcibly brought home to me that a Preface is absolutely necessary—both by way of explanation as well as by way of apology.

These extracts are not to be judged from their Literary value—may-be they possess but little!—but as an expression of various moods and ideas which have sprung from the perusal of certain books. That they originally formed the foundation of a Literary Review makes them necessarily somewhat "scrappy." Many of the ideas, too, belong to the days of Peace—when we were all inclined to regard frivolous things seriously and serious things from the point of view of the cynic.

Briefly, these extracts are to be regarded merely as friendly chats "over the fireside" in the evening—when all the world is still. They are now issued in volume by the special request of many readers all over the world, and in the sincere hope that by their sale a very deserving fund may be materially benefited. And if the book also proves a means whereby new readers are amused, or interested, or rendered furious—in other words, "taken out of themselves" and encouraged "to forget," I shall be repaid a thousandfold.

RICHARD KING.

St. Dunstan's Hostel for
Blinded Soldiers and Sailors,
November, 1917.

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PREFATORY.

FOR some time past there has appeared in the pages of *The Tatler* newspaper a serious literary article, "With Silent Friends," signed 'Richard King.' That article, alike by its quality of style, its insight and its judgment, commands attention from the thoughtful. The fact that 'Richard King' is a pseudonym in no way militates against the essential value and charm of what he writes. He is known to many of us as an indefatigable worker in the cause of our blind soldiers to whom his efforts have given abundant light in their sad darkness.

The insight and the sympathy which Richard King has displayed in his active association with the blind is admirably reflected in these pages. In them we see also the quietest influences under which the author works and dreams amid the strain and stress of war. His one great influence is Amiel, the Swiss mystic, whose *Journal Intime* was first revealed to the English public by Mrs. Humphry Ward. There will, however, be found in these pages, I think, a literary quality which not unnaturally reminds us of a brilliant essayist whose name is associated with the first *Tatler*, Richard Steele. Those finely expressed thoughts on men and books which make the eighteenth

century essayist still live for many of us have their counterpart in this delightful essayist of the twentieth century whose outlook is upon quite another world, a world in which the railway, the steamship, the flying machine, and the telephone, have their part. Any introduction to a good book must necessarily be somewhat of an impertinence, but I have been pressed into service to say something of this author who is himself one of the most shy and retiring of men. Those who know him esteem him for his winning personal v. I shall be surprised if the public which reads this little volume will not love him for the written word and this, I am sure, is all he asks of life.

CLEMENT K. SHORTER.

November 19th, 1917.

With Silent Friends

By RICHARD KING.

"The Kingdom of the Blind."

To each of us it is given, so it is said, the power to understand one great trouble. To me there is no tragedy which touches me quite so deeply as blindness; it is accentuated the more in the case of those who have become blind through war, or accident, or disease. For those who have never seen have made a world of their own in which they live. It is a world of sound only, and those manifestations of that inner vision, which is the sixth sense of blind people. But for those who have become blind—they, alas! have not yet fashioned a world out of their surrounding darkness—they are still struggling, groping through a blackness which seems so terrible, because so new and strange. To these my heart goes out with a sympathy of the kind which it is impossible for me to put into words. The sight of a blinded man touches me more deeply than anything else in the whole wide world. It "calls" to all that is good in me—what little good there is! I am no fighter; I loathe and detest disputes of even a minor, social nature. But those who would be unkind or cruel to a blinded man I would never forgive, and, if I could punish, I would punish with all the strength and passion that is in me. The subject has been discussed—that all the blinded soldiers and sailors of this war should live together—a little kingdom of the blind. I pray, that if I am alive, should this thing happen, I may live with them in that kingdom. I ask no

greater mission in all life. For each one of us must have something to live for—children, ambition, an Ideal. We cannot mount upward all by ourselves. Well, I—I would only ask to live among the blinded soldiers all my life. I love them—there is no other word which can express my meaning. I love them—and I ask of Destiny no other tale than the story of service in their sad cause. Knowing them as I do and loving them so well, I cannot see a blind man in the street without desiring to raise my hat in humility and respect. For the courage of the blind is greater than any courage shown on the field of battle. It passeth all understanding. And it endureth—yes, that is the tragedy of it all!—it endureth until the end of life—alas!

The Dull Ache of Every Day.

Most people can understand and realise the dramatic sorrows of life. Death, disease, loss of fortune, loss of friends—these bring one's immediate neighbourhood around one in tears and lamentations and that real sympathy which says little and does all, and that false sympathy which is at best so little better than idle curiosity manifesting itself in echoing moans. But there are not many people, alas! who can see and realise the dull ache of so many men and women's dreary Everyday—the ever-lengthening list of bitter sorrows, disappointments, blasted hopes, realised fears, slights, tears for the never-any-more, sighs for things which, alas! can never be—all of which lie hidden, too poignant, too real, too altogether intimate to display before the prying eyes of the world. They are the sorrows we never tell which blast the happiness of—oh, so many lives! Death and the dramatic tragedies of life require no hiding. One may—one is even expected to—give way to tears, and tears are always a relief—a way out. But the ache of the Everyday, the

tears we shed when alone, the real tragedy of our lives which we would die sooner than reveal to a world which does not understand—they are the sorrows which turn life into Hell and make a smile one of the most glorious manifestations of pure courage in all the world. And this courage the blind possess. It is so splendid that, failing all human explanation, one likes to believe that Nature gives to them a strength which she denies to those whose sorrow is merely of to-day. But this, after all, is merely human reason striving to explain something which seems superhuman. I have seen the same splendid courage in hospitals—hospitals for incurable diseases. And as one sees the valiant smiles which seem to illuminate the hearts where one would suspect all darkness to be, one remembers the extraordinary "fuss" so many people make when they have influenza or a headache. And one feels very humble and not a little ashamed. Verily the greatest sermons in life are to be found in life itself; the Church can offer us nothing in any way comparable.

The Kingdom of the Blinded Soldier.

And thus I see the Kingdom of the Blinded Soldier, Because it is a kingdom of real and enduring sorrow, it resembles rather the happy kingdom of the Blessed. People, when they visit it, exclaim "How sad!"—immediately decking their faces out in all the paraphernalia expressive of deep sympathy and sorrow. They advance to meet the tragedy of it all as they would advance to meet the sufferer of a most acute toothache. They like to cry, "Poor thing!"—and see that this cry is heard broadcast. They exclaim, "How *dreadful*!" and imagine that the exclamation shows them to be intensely sympathetic. They would like to sit down and weep, or, failing, to be able to find a chair or a convenient bench, stroke the "poor dear's" hands, the while muttering audibly how they

feel for them and how unutterably awful it all is. They will even relate the long story of how they once had inflammation in both eyes and had them bandaged over for three weeks. These "three weeks," they declare, have given them understanding. They know exactly what it feels like! Briefly, they indulge in all the usual formula suitable for the dramatic woe. Dramatic woes are the only woes which the average man or woman has imagination enough to understand. But, as I said before, the real tragedies of life are the tragedies which are never told, the tragedies which are hidden behind laughter and smiles, the tragedies—half of which only God Himself will ever know. As a story they are very long — oh, so long! There is nothing dramatic about them. They are just grey-coloured—grey, verging into black. They do not throw great splotches of vivid contrast on to the dull pages of life; they just tint it—the deeper as the long years pass. And this is the tragedy of the blind. It does not demand tears and lamentations and cries, it demands that much rarer and more beautiful sympathy—the sympathy which reflects the smiles of every shadowy hope, brings laughter to the eyes dimmed by tears, helps, encourages, calls to that *joie de vivre* without which life becomes impossible. And above all, and through it all, it *never forgets—never once does it forget*! But its "memory" is shown by laughter and love, and by those thousand-and-one little unimportant things which show real sympathy far more than expressions of horror and regret.

How to Help the Blind.

THERE is only one way to help the blind—as, indeed, there is only one way to bring sunshine into any real and lasting distress—and that is never to forget for one single instant that they *cannot see*, and to show this

remembrance, not by doing everything one can, so saving the blind man from doing anything, but to encourage him to do all he can for himself, the while you are near at hand to turn his failures into laughter and to treat his successes as a matter of course and thus a subject needing no comment. For the popular idea of the tragedy of blindness is that the blind man cannot see the wonder of the spring, the ancient glory of the hills, the beauty of nature and the world. But this is where the vast majority of blind men feel their handicap the least. After all, these are the glories which very few men and women who can see take the trouble to appreciate except in a very casual and academic way. No, the handicap of the blind man lies in far less poetical and more mundane things. I will not tell them here. They are so "Everyday" and unheroic that they might invite laughter—and anyone who laughs at a blind man is a cad, *tout court*. Blindness is a sorrow which rarely needs any of the ordinary and popular forms of sympathy. And in this it resembles all great and lasting troubles. For this reason, so very few people are capable of understanding a real handicap in life. Their "souls" are not gifted with imagination sufficient to see the silent heroisms of Everyday. Their hearts are not quite big enough for that love which never ceases loving, which bears and forbears, which grows the stronger with the passing years, because, once, at the very beginning, a vista of these passing years, and all they were going to mean, was vouchsafed unto them. There is only one real tragedy in all life, and that is the tragedy for which Time will have no real healing. And for this tragedy there is one real sympathy—the sympathy which is born of love, the love which is deep enough to see beyond the tears of To-day, far away into the future, into the long To-morrow, when the tears will be dried and only the "soul" weeps in

silence, unseen except by the eyes of love—love which can see *everything*.

The Essential Things.

And one of the most important lessons, and one, strangely enough, which it is most difficult of all to learn, but which must yet be learnt before there is forged that intangible link of understanding by which alone one man is able to help another man in his trouble, whether he be blind or sighted, it does not matter which—this important lesson to learn is to realise that the blind man you would wish to help *cannot see*. There are some things you must never do; you must never pass a blind man without a word; you must never stop to speak with him without taking his hand; if there ever arises the necessity to upbraid him, you must always forgive him in your heart before you let him go. To fail to do these things brings his blindness forcibly before him—and no matter how sorry you feel for him in theory, in practice you will have failed if ever you forget these essential but apparently simple things. It is not necessary for me to explain their importance—only your imagination will tell you if I speak the truth. The blind man lives in a world of darkness, and kind thoughts, no matter how sympathetically uttered, are merely the, as it were, "gramophone record" of words unless accompanied by that caress which makes the sympathy which uttered them seem real and clear. And above all you must have patience—oceans and oceans of patience. There are moments when the blinded man is, vulgarly speaking, "queer." He will be "fed up" with everything and everybody, and he will often express his satiation with things in general in terms more forcible than polite. It is so easy, so appallingly easy, to "hit back," as it were—to prove to him that the feeling of being "fed up" is not entirely on his

side. This is a fatal and oh so easy a mistake. A cruel or an unkind, or even a callous, word takes root in a blind man's heart, and the weed may poison his life at the very moment when only flowers should grow there. For when a blinded man complains of being "fed up," he is not really "fed up" with the things of which he complains, he is "fed up" with being always blind, with never a ray of light, never a moment when he can be free and independent physically as he once was and as other men are. Love will teach you lots of subtle, unapparent lessons like this, if you live long enough with the blind and love them deeply enough to listen and understand.

Love and Wealth.

Sometimes when I read that So-and-so, the multi-millionaire, has given so many thousand pounds to such and such a good cause, with all the pæans of praise, the advertisements, the "three hearty cheers" and "he's a jolly fine fellow" of the Press and the Pulpit, I should like to insert a paragraph in praise of simple men and women who have given of their all and have given something equally as appreciated as money. Money has given the food, the housing, the extra comforts of life, but there is something equally as real, equally as important, and just as essential as these. I should like to tell of the noble women I know who have given love unstinting, love inexhaustible, love as unselfish and unself-seeking as any to be found on this sad old earth. They have given what is perhaps the most precious gift in all life. and they have given it without a word of self-praise, a word of outside commendation. I hope that there is a newspaper somewhere in a better world than this which also is noting their willing sacrifice. You will know who they are by the smile which greets them when they come, the forlorn look of sadness which follows them as they

go. They are very quiet—these simple people—and sometimes I hardly think they realise the good they do (which, perhaps, is the surest sign of pure goodness)—but to me they are the one bright spot in all the world I try to remember when things are dark and Fate in league with your enemies and Heaven is no longer your friend.

The Common People.

The longer I live, the more I am struck by one startling fact—which is the soul-vulgarity of the "gentle" born. I am not speaking, of course, of the superficial refinements—there is a ritual of breeding just as there is a ritual of religion, the one signifying as little of the fundamental Truth as the other—I am speaking of the real "spirit" which *should* underlie the outer symbol. The real spirit which should prompt this outward sense of breeding is understanding and sympathy for those less well rewarded with worldly, intellectual, and spiritual goods. In his dealing with other men and women, especially those in a more lowly position, the true worth of a man or woman's "aristocracy" is seen. Not charity alone, but the spirit which prompts that charity and the manner in which it declares itself, proves the real worth of a human act of kindness. We hear a great deal in these days about the mingling of classes, how the old-class barriers have been demolished and a new sense of democracy established. But for the most part the only evidence of this new forging of men and women of all ranks and all classes consists of the picture of Privates Smith, Jones, and Robinson being invited by Lady Thingametight to have tea with her on the lawn. There are a thousand acts of generosity and kindness being done all over England every day, three-fourths of which will leave as slight an impression on the giver and on the receiver as does a three-penny bit wrapt in tissue paper

and thrown out of a window by a hidden hand to the crossing-sweeper in the street. For the one and principal lesson which the rich must learn—and by the rich I also include every employer of labour, every mistress of servants, everyone who has dealings with other men in a position of " boss "—and that is the fact that each man and woman one meets through life is a " lady " or a " gentleman " until they prove themselves to be otherwise; or rather, as I should prefer to put it—because I loathe the words " lady " and " gentleman," except that they have become symbols of a type—they are " white " men and " white " women until they show themselves to be unworthy of their human brotherhood.

The Ordinary Person.

The tragedy is that the ordinary person fails altogether to understand the ordinary person—they are, I suppose, too ordinary. For the Ordinary Person at home has mostly known only the self-sacrifice of white bread and sugar—hence that mixture of ecstatic petting and tactless condescension which make one inclined either to boil with indignation or blush with shame. The soldier is greeted with too much heroic flag-wagging and too little common ordinary decency. He will be given a " Number 9 " by a duchess and refused permission to visit his own home. He will have his name inscribed in the Roll of Honour, and have to fight like a criminal at bay for the full amount of his back pay.

The Secret of All Good.

For sympathy is the secret of all lasting good. Not the sympathy which weeps and pets, but the sympathy which sacrifices itself and helps. Real sympathy is best shown, not by a flood of tears, but by a willing and loving aid to that reconstruction by which a man

and woman may once more hold up their heads high in that estate of self-dependence which is real independence. It is not praise or blame that men want, but mutual recognition of one another's disadvantages and a loving readiness to help us to overcome them. Praise and blame alone never did anyone any good. After all, if I have the advantage of you in one thing, you have the advantage of me in another, which in the sight of God make us both equal. But I may be able to help you in your distress and you may be able to help me in mine. We stand together as men, and not all the difference in social station, or education, or wealth makes us other than we are—two human beings struggling upward on the road of Life from a starting point mysterious towards a destination we wot not of. We are two very ordinary mortals with the same weaknesses, the same temptations, the same human longings and disappointments and fears, the same inclination to go astray, the self-same doubts and lack of faith. And that fact will always remain indisputable—all other is a tissue of perversion and ignorance and lies. So many people mistake men servants and a motor-car for virtue, and a diamond tiara for probity and honour. The mistake is very easy, but it is no less a mistake for all that.

The Failure of the Church.

All real goodness is humble—it could not be otherwise. To believe the contrary is one of the causes of the clergy's failure. Christ has never failed in the world, but the men who profess to devote their lives to Him have been left by humanity in the lurch. A few are beloved, more are tolerated, mostly they are ignored. They are never so ignored as in the moment of a great crisis. And one of the reasons of this failure by clergymen to get hold of and inspire the great mass of men and women is their aloofness from those they

would succour and help. One is not less aloof because one always comes to the bedside of the dying and reads to them a chapter on the beauty of Christ's forgiveness, or because one's wife and the female portions of one's family poke their noses into poor people's business for the best of moral motives. I look at the simple cottages of a country village and then I look at the large and airy rectories surrounded by beautiful gardens; or, I walk through the slums of a provincial town pityingly until I come to the vicarage with two doors —one for visitors and the other for servants—whereupon something inside me laughs the kind of mirthless laugh which is more than half a sneer. No, the longer I live, the more forcibly it is borne upon me that if you would help the poor and the suffering you must live among them, work with them, suffer with them too. To descend upon them from, as it were, "on high," breeds suspicion—and no good is ever done where anything less than mutual honesty is met by mutual trust. It is absurd to imagine that familiarity is a danger to Authority. It is not. Authority, merely as Authority, never commands anything but the outward symbol of obeisance. It is respect, and respect alone, which inspires a willingness to "make good." For respect is the solid foundation upon which the Temple of Eternal Love is built—and Love can accomplish anything.

Spring.

A LITTLE time ago I was wandering down a Devonshire lane. The day was one of those summer days which, in this nearly always vile but occasionally heavenly climate of ours, had somehow crept away from its proper season to glorify an April morning. High banks covered with violets and primroses—daffodils dancing under the apple trees, as yet bare of blossom. I could have wept at the very sweetness of it all. Primroses

. . . violets . . . daffodils . . . sunshine . . . blue sky . . . a Devonshire lane . . . and, not so many miles away, the shrieking of shells, bloodshed, death, the maiming of fine young lives, all the horror and tragedy of war. It was spring. In front of me, perched on a holly bush, a robin sang to the sun as if its little heart would burst with the loveliness of it all. The air was alive with the music of nature's symphony—the murmur of things busy with the joy of living. War—the pain, the horror, the misery of it all—seemed like a dream, sitting quietly there in a Devonshire lane. It was impossible to realise that Man—of all God's creatures the one who could live at peace if so he willed—was killing his fellow-man for some quarrel which neither of them could truthfully define, killing him with all the devilish devices which his brain—God's glorious gift to him—could imagine, and, imagining, create. All around me was peace and sunshine and the happy song of birds singing to their mates. Here there was no hint of war and suffering and crime. Here there was no picture of man's diabolical cruelty to man. It was just a "little bit of Heaven"—summer sunshine, flowers, the song of the birds, peace, silence, and the knowledge that it was spring. I tried to blot out of my mind all reality, all the memory of suffering—appalling suffering, yet made wonderful by weak men's extraordinary silent heroism. I tried to root out all the memory of the pain and tragedy I have seen. For a little while I wanted to live as nature lives—for the present moment only. I wanted to forget. And for a little space of time I did manage to lull myself into a false belief that things were, not as they are, but as they ought to be. For a little while I did manage to cheat reality of its pain. Then, presently, along this quiet Devonshire lane there came a young man—a man in the prime of his youth and promise. He came alone, feeling his way with a stick. At every step, he touched

with his stick the bank covered with the primroses and violets. Then suddenly I realised what he meant. For him there was no glory in this spring morning. He saw it not. He only knew that the sun shone, that the air was heavy with the scent of flowers, that for him —so long as he should live—the world would henceforth be nothing but darkness, silence, loneliness, punctuated by sounds. He was blind. And he was a soldier.

A Garden.

THERE are times when the tragedy of some people's lives becomes unbearable, even to contemplate mentally. One feels that one will never be able to be careless and happy again—never any more. Well, perhaps none of us ever will—those of us who have realised even a little of what war and its inevitable misery means. For us the world, life, everything will for ever afterwards be different. Yet still there suddenly comes upon us the old peace-time longing which used to comfort us years ago when the world looked black and ugly —the longing to get right away from everything and everybody, to shut oneself up within four high walls and dream away the years which should come after in the silent study of dead men's thoughts and in the cultivation of roses. We felt that we wanted no one to come near us except that *rara avis*—an "understanding" gardener without a weakness for either putting us in our proper places or failing to realise his own. We wanted this little plot of the world all to ourselves, where we could grow old in plaintive melancholy because a callous world had failed to appreciate us at our true and noble worth. We liked to imagine that we cut a very picturesque and tragic figure alone thus, in the middle of our garden filled with the unfulfilled promises of innumerable seed catalogues. We used to love to nurse our wee-bit woes in those days until they assumed the proportion of a Juggernaut crushing us

down. We used to weep because we were not "understood"—as if for us to be "understood" would bring a peace and a joy to the neighbourhood out of all proportion to the poor figure we cut in it as an object of beauty. How we hugged our little woes to our bosoms and cried aloud to Heaven that we firmly believed our life to be quite the finest example of what the wicked may expect in Hell. We found it difficult to explain exactly the pain which burdened down our hearts, but it usually found explanation in the words loneliness, idleness, too many relations and too few friends, not enough money, and too many years stretching behind us. In other words, we were bored—soul-bored, the most deadly form of all deadly forms of boredom.

Sympathy.

We had nothing to live for, and nobody to live for, and living for oneself is always unsatisfactory—unless you have heaps of people living for you. Then came the war—and with the war all these old woes of ours vanished in a night. To-day the world is tragically full of men with real troubles—troubles so terrible that one feels they are far beyond those efforts at fulsome sympathy in which people with imaginary or passing ones love to bask, the while they dab their eyes gently so as not to inflame them, and surreptitiously powder their noses. To those who need someone for whom to live there wait thousands for whom life can offer no further joy beyond the love and friendship of those who have love and friendship to give. The father-spirit, the mother-spirit, the friend-spirit, need never starve henceforth in the lonely human heart of those who have health and the gift of sympathy and understanding. The world had little or no use for the useless—the humanly useless—man or woman before the war; the world will have less use for them than ever when the war is over, unless, of course, they have been

rendered " useless " by the war. The future will require real men, and real women, and real hearts. The sham men, the sham women, the sham hearts will be swept into the rubbish-heap, where they should naturally be were it not a common delusion for the world to imagine that everything is rare and wonderful which happens to be rich. The call of the future will be the call of Truth. The purifying fires of war create those ashes from which nations as well as individuals rise to a new existence.

Intentions.

You will find through life that most people are moved by the " best intentions "—even when they are about to strike you with a hammer. This often makes existence very troublesome, I own. It *is* hard to see that one's aggressor is fired by the best motives—according to his own sense of reasoning—when he turns upon you furiously, hammer, about to fall, poised in the air. But this is the truth. Very rarely do people commit crimes of which they are heartily ashamed, even at the moment of committing them. The punishment by conscience would be too terrific. But the people who do the dirty deeds of infamy have often no conscience at all—or rather, they look at things in a totally different light, and so have a divine excuse for doing what they do. After all it is not their fault, and no man should be punished for what is not his fault, unless he injures another thereby. And even when he injures another the punishment is merely punishment, never reformation—which should be the beginning and end of all justice, shouldn't it? So the Kaiser will probably die peacefully in his bed, whereas thousands of his victims die in the agony of Hell upon the battlefield. Well, if the Kaiser did not realise what he was doing—and none of the arch-fiends of history ever did, I am sure—he ought quite justifiably to

pass away in peace. He probably thinks he is being moved by the very highest motives, both for the House of Hohenzollern and Germany. Then why should he be punished for what he was so mentally constituted as to consider "noble ends"? I suppose—looking at his crime from the standpoint of *He* who knows all—he should go scot-free. But oh, it is hard to see such dastardly crimes against mankind go unpunished. There is no torture, both in mind and spirit; there is scarcely any length of time too long during which that agony should continue which, according to human idea of justice, would fit punishment to his crime.

The Long Sad Years which come after.

He stood up in the House of Lords—spruce, well-dressed, apparently well-satisfied—and declared that there were a "vast number of men physically unfit who had been recruited." Then he made a nice amiable political excuse for this state of affairs. But over the House there seemed to hang an air of grievance that anyone should suggest that these poor men, who had so nobly come forward to answer their country's call, should be pensioned, or receive an adequate indemnity. It would cost so much money! It would cost many millions, in fact! Horrible! A sudden anger surged through me at the utter callousness of it all. I saw the men I have personally known—fine men, *real* men—coughing their ruined lives out in dependence upon others—and all the horror of what dependence upon others means. I saw one or two blind men and boys without pensions, who happened to be blinded by causes not connected with the field of battle, but nevertheless caused by the stress of war. I saw them all—these poor fellows whose physique had broken down under the stress of military discipline—and then I came out into the open air and saw the flag-wagging, heard the cheering, listened to the encouragement and the

praise of the world which lives at home and is fought for. And it seemed to me that the responsibilities—the moral responsibilities—of those who are being fought for are one million times greater than the responsibility of those who go out to fight. For the work of those who fight is a work bounded by the duration of the war, but the work of those who are fought for endures just so long as one of those broken heroes shall live. For the responsibility of those who are fought for is not only comprised in giving wounded Tommies " joy rides," or singing to them, or feeding them with chocolates, or inviting them out to tea, or handing cups of coffee to them over counters—though these things are pleasant things—it lasts, or ought to last or years and years; it ought to last for so long as there is a man living whose life has been ruined or broken or our sakes—no matter what the cause—and who needs our help and sympathy and our real friendship. For without their supreme sacrifice, where would any of us be—we, and our luxuries and entertainments and our motor-cars and our gratified feeling of generosity when we do a little " war work " or give a sum of money to a charity for the help of wounded soldiers?

Another Scene.

HERE is another scene—a scene which turned me cold at the callous indifference of the big world. We were at the headquarters of his regiment—the soldier and I. I had come with him to inquire about his pension, because he could not go by himself—he will never be able to go anywhere by himself never any more. looked at him as he sat in the chair in the office—subdued, meek, asking rather apologetically for something which was his due, something which I feel sure the nation—whose money it is after all, and for whose sake he had sacrificed something more precious than life

itself—would have given him with both hands gladly. And I could have wept my heart out, giving him all that was mine to give. For I knew that a year ago he was full of life and enthusiasm and hard work; a man who loved the wide spaces, who loved freedom, the big world, his liberty; a man who hated patronage and crowds and the awful "fussiness" of people being kind on a "formula." I knew all these things—for he is my friend—and alas! I also knew that everything that made life lovable he had lost, that now he was pitifully fighting to make something of his poor life—"to feel that he is still some use in the world," as he so sadly expresses it—and alas! too, I knew that years hence, when the world will have forgotten him, he will be found in some obscure corner, a lonely, broken-spirited man, at the mercy of anyone who likes to be kind or unkind to him, and people passing by him will say, "You see that fellow groping his way with a stick over there—well, he was wounded in the war. Poor creature! They say he has such a devil of a temper!"

His Right.

And at the headquarters of his regiment the officer in charge cross-examined him at impertinent length. I sat there infuriated at his tone and manner. Here was a man broken for the rest of his life; there was another man in the prime of life—healthy, comfortable, but no word of sympathy, no word of encouragement, no little act of kindness came from him. He represented "authority," and he knew it. But oh, the sadness of it all! The inhumanity! The lack of understanding! I felt, as I left that office, that I would for all my life be against everyone who suggested that a question of the amount stood between the comfort of a wounded soldier and our own sacrifice. There should be sacrifice to win the war; there should also be a double sacrifice to see that those who won it and are broken should never know either want or the gall-

ing feeling of dependence given by cold-hearted charity. It is *after the war* that the real war work of those who remain behind to be fought for should begin. It is *after* the war — when we discard our uniforms, and cease from advertised war work, and our dallying in hospitals among the "dear" wounded, and our singing and dancing at the base; when our flag days and our charity concerts are over—that the *real work*—no *not work*, the love and affectionate gratitude for those who have lost so much for us—should begin, and having once begun should go on and on unceasingly just so long as any wounded soldier lives. And this duty is more an individual than a national one.

Lest We Forget.

Let the people of the world remember, and remember every moment of their lives, that in a wounded soldier there is no question of class, or distinction; they are, one and all, our equals—perhaps it would be better for us if we owned in all humility that they are our superiors. For men who for us have been through the horror of this war there is no sacrifice on our part too great to make. What these horrors are so few of us at home can even imagine. We think we realise it when we see pictures of it in the illustrated papers; we fancy that we can understand it a little when we see the soldiers pouring into London mud-stained from the trenches. We like to cover fighting and war with glory —but the glory of war is only seen by people who sit and think of it at home. In this war there is no glory —just one long unspeakable horror, one long appalling misery and discomfort.

Our Duty.

I can imagine people turning away from sad stories. They are too horrible! Well, perhaps, they are. But

the war is a horror, and it is a horror which we all ought to face—unflinchingly. For until we realise its awfulness, we cannot realise our full duty to those who have been in, or even near, such appalling suffering. Surely there are enough people at home who will all their lives hold out loving arms to the men who have gone through such a Hell for their sakes. Surely, too, there is enough gratitude and humility in the world for the world to see, and seeing enforce, any Government who happens to be in power, not only to deal "fairly" —one knows too well what all governments consider "fair" when it comes to pensioning the labourers in Art of War!—but *generously*, as the free gift of one man, whose life has been saved, to the man who saved him. Kindness immeasurable there lies in so many human hearts, but kindness has never been able to make itself felt politically. Thank Heaven there are men who fight the cause of those who are too weak to fight for themselves. Fight?—the very word jars in such a cause as this. Even Charity can rarely dissociate its manners from those of a somewhat kindly-disposed penitentiary, looking for endless pæans of gratitude. When I watch the amiable patronage of the wounded I could laugh—were it not so sad. For those who are left behind to be fought for—especially for those who are too old or too weak to fight—their work is a life-long one, and it should be a work of love. When the guns are silent and those who are maimed and broken are "dropped" to pick up the threads of their existence as best they may, let the world still keep up the cry against certain "slackers"—the middle-aged, weak, feminine, and old "slackers"—those who will reap the price of victory, a price which, no matter what sacrifice they make, they will never be able to repay. This cry of the pensionless soldier makes one shudder for the heart of the world. For if anyone wants to know a little of the life a soldier leads in his daily life for his King and Country—let him read

"Vive la France." It is vivid, it is thrilling, it is a picture of war—war without the glamour which surrounds it from an armchair—it is horrible, glorious, and divine, but sad beyond any word in the language to express.

Anticipation and Reality.

NEVER anticipate a joy. It is fatal. Pleasures long looked forward to are usually pleasures looked back upon with regret. Disappointment lurks behind the glamour of a joy awaited. It is the unexpected rays of happiness which shine the most resplendent at the ending of the day. It is tiresome, I know; since one is either disappointed at the fact that an anticipation of pleasure has never quite fulfilled expectations, or one is exasperated that one did not realise how happy one was until one's happiness was over. When we are really happy we are too happy being happy to understand its joy to the fullest extent; it is only when it is all finished that we appreciate entirely the pleasure which is now a memory. So, in our ignorance, we try to repeat the joy. We plan and arrange and look forward; but the result is always a snare and a delusion. "Never anything twice"—someone has said. It is, alas! very true. Only troubles repeat themselves with emphasis, as it were. Joys always grow fainter whenever we endeavour to reproduce them.

Still We Go On.

YET—fools that we are!—we still go on trying. The number of people who are expending all their energies in *manufacturing* Happiness runs into a million millions. Yet, happiness is a thing which is never manufactured. You never find it as you find diamonds, by digging away hard and hoping for the best. You just find it unexpectedly, and in the most unlikely places—just as you find friends. If you set out to find a friend,

you run into a whole army of bores at once. It is only when you resign yourself to suffer bores, if not gladly, at least in resignation, that one among them suddenly appears before you—an *alter ego*. It is the people whose life-labour is to qualify for Heaven who eventually arrive there by the very longest way round. It is those who just do their best without thinking who suddenly find themselves at the gates of Paradise. Even Sin is rarely found by the enthusiast of its joys. Debauch is more often a sign of heartbreak than an illusion of ecstasy. You can no more discover happiness by striving for it than you can discover forgetfulness by drowning Memory in drink. All you get in the first case is Dead Sea fruit; the most the other does for you is, vulgarly speaking, to give you a nauseating dislike of breakfast and a "fat head."

Other People's Joys.

It is a curious fact that everybody else seems to share in the monopoly of happiness. We only are shareholders in the Company of Pain. The moment you begin to think about your happiness or your troubles—the conclusion always appears like that. Of course, the wise man or woman doesn't think about either. He simply fights against the trouble when he meets it and enjoys without thinking the joys which suddenly appear in his path. As one looks back on life, the chief regret of the majority of us is that we anticipated *all* those troubles which never happened and most of those which did, while, for some ridiculous scruple, we wilfully evaded all the joys, or indulged in them with one mental eye fixed on a woeful To-morrow. Most of us are very stupid, aren't we? And never so stupid as when we face our own happiness. We meet troubles heroically, but we go towards joy evasively, as if we would deceive our world that we were going in another direction.

The Joy-killers.

And this in a way is natural, because the World has little or no sympathy with joy. You will find a hundred people ready to mop up your tears to one who will go out of his way to make you smile. Most religions seem to be little else than a determination to make peoples' knees knock together by a series of awful threats. Heaven is painted with every joy but the joy of laughter. But in *my* heaven we shall, I hope, laugh a very great deal. I would sooner laugh than cry any day, and if, perchance, I once or twice laugh through my tears—well, there's a second or two of pain robbed of its sting, anyway. And happiness is something which no eternal future of either torment or psalm-singing can take away. For that blessing Heaven be praised! Besides, Happiness is never wrong if it be a whole-hearted happiness and not a furtive slinking around the hem of joy. Anyway—and this is the truth—if you want to *play* you must expect to *pay*—and there's an end on't.

Other People's Luck.

But to repeat what I have said before—and it is always nice to repeat one's own remarks when there is no one at hand to tell you that repetition is the sure sign of a garrulous old age—it is Other People who seem to have all the luck. Oh, the bliss we could get out of life if only we stood in somebody else's shoes! There are people—well, millions of them, in fact—who live entirely to show others what they ought to do with their lives. They find their happiness in the boredom they inflict. And this desire to direct the world around us as if it were an army, and we its commander-in-chief, delegated to that position by God, is simply frightfully catching. It only needs a comfortable income, no sense of humour, and absolutely nothing useful to do,

for the whole neighbourhood to suddenly appear as if asking our guidance and advice. And how gladly we give it—when we have a steady bank balance and grandmotherly ideas! So, perhaps, I too have caught the microbe when I complain of the fact that, when people travel and write books all about it, they invariably find so many charming people and and see so many unique sights which I never found or saw. I have travelled, but I have rarely met charming people. I have met lots of quaint ones, and heaps of smells, and I have learnt that a guide-book tour, if I may so describe it, is as disappointing as a long-anticipated joy. The real thrills of travel—the real thrilling thrills—are nearly always those which you never expected to find—the reflexion of a rose-tinted sunset on the towers of Rouen Cathedral; the voice of an unseen singer one evening in Venice; the first glimpse of a snow-capped mountain; the sight of Moscow under snow. The rest I find difficult to remember. I " enthuse " because enthusiasm is expected of me—and, being human, I " enthuse " still more when I find my companion has never seen any of them at all. But to myself, honestly, I remain quite cold at the things I went forth to see, and, maybe, the fondest memory of Paris is, not the Louvre, but the tragedy of a painted woman of the boulevards struggling to kill the weariness of her soul.

The Chance.

When preaching the Great Gospel of Economy it is always as well to begin on the Poor. The Poor seem to be placed there for the Well-Fed to practise their theories of morality upon. And they are supposed to receive the gift with a deafening Hymn of Thankfulness. It is for their good—and we all know with what enthusiasm people inform us of things which are told us " for our good." Unfortunately the one thing the

preachers of the moral gospel among the poor seem to forget is that in the hearts of the inhabitants of the slums as well as in the hearts of those who live in Park Lane there is the same desire to garner some memories of happiness and amusement while the opportunity still presents itself. It is all very easy to preach the gospel of hard work and economy, but it is far easier to save three hundred a year out of a thousand than half-a-crown a week out of thirty shillings—and, it seems to me, that one must have about a thousand a year before one may comfortably preach to the poor without the risk of getting hit by a brickbat. Of course, what the preacher preaches may very often be true, but that does not lessen the poor man's temptation to amuse himself a little while he may; and, in any case, the utmost economy out of thirty shillings a week won't provide much of a "cushion" on which to rest when the body is old and the spirit broken—no, not even if the economist lives on cheese parings, works hard, never drinks, nor bets, nor visits picture palaces, nor smokes, nor grumbles at wages and rents, as the preachers think he always ought to do.

Sympathy.

THERE seems to be such an utter ignorance of human nature in the hearts—yes, it is only in the *heart* where human nature is ever understood!—of those who ascend into the pulpits of the world to shake their fore-finger at those who are not in a position to answer back. Men and women are the same all over the world—more or less; only, I have found in my life that trouble and hard work and poverty seem to have made the poor—generally speaking, of course—kinder, more generous, more natural, consequently simpler and sweeter, than those whose situation and fortune seem

to have convinced them that "they are not as other men are—and *thank the Lord for it*!"

Duty.

No one will ever "preach" people into doing their duty. Instinct revolts at preachers. After all, who am I?—who, indeed, is anybody that he should deliver his own little Sermon on the Mount? Live your sermon, *don't preach it*, is the only way in which to make disciples—even though you may never know them and they may never run around telling each other how marvellous you are! So, metaphorically speaking, you will miss the occasion when a bouquet is presented to you on a platform by a nervous and unwilling child, but you will, on the other hand, have brought the subtle and irresistible influence of love and sympathy into the world, without which no act for the betterment of humanity is ever accomplished. It may sound old-fashioned and sentimental and romantic and all those much-ridiculed truisms by which the cheap cynic tries to deny the great unseen forces of the *real* Christ, but I have learnt by experience that only when people know and feel that *their* interest is *yours* will they ever make *your* interest *theirs*. Meet men and women simply, naturally, with love and a desire for better understanding, and they will respond with all that is best and noblest in their natures; but preach at them, talk at them, keep pointing out to them this duty and that, and they will remain resentful, suspicious, and just as unheeding as they were before you began to exert yourself. Metaphorically speaking, there are in the world too many fat people being driven from Park Lane in a luxurious Rolls-Royce to attend a meeting organised to show the lean inhabitants of East Ham the way they ought to spend their money. No wonder East Ham still remains "unregenerate." To preach is always more or less of an impertinence, but a desire to help and sympathise is understood by all.

Coals to Newcastle.

I ALWAYS love the sight of a churchful of well-fed, well-to-do people—their dependants being tucked nicely away at the back behind a pillar—sitting complaisant and solemn while an enthusiastic clergyman calls them a herd of "miserable sinners." I sometimes think that people rather like being preached at as long as there is not the remotest chance of the sermon interfering with their daily lives. Perhaps it really *is* rather pleasant to sit under warnings of eternal punishment and afterwards to meander comfortably home to a good Sunday dinner. After all, the fact of a good dinner seems rather to suggest that one must have been very good to get it. Had we been really as bad as the clergyman told us we were, we should have no dinner at all. There is a certain persuasion of moral rectitude in seeing before us the best end of a neck of mutton "discovered" for us by an excellent parlourmaid from beneath a silver dish-cover at our own table. It convinces us of many things. It convinces us that the parlourmaid neither loves, nor suffers, nor is really sacrificing herself as we are; it convinces us that the world is a very pleasant place; it convinces us that all change in the social system is wrong; it convinces us that someone—it may be our husband, or our father, or our forefather—once worked so superhumanly that we have every right to live in cosy indifference to the needs of our less fortunate brethren and our duty towards them because he did so. Finally, it convinces us that we have the right to preach and patronise and look for "curtsies" from the lowly, who, at the same time, ought also to be meek. We do not use our money to make our own lives and the lives of others happier and more beautiful, but we use it to force a seeming acquiescence from the world that we are something of a Great Panjandrum!

The Real Self.

How little people know us—people who, because of the close relationship in which we live with them, ought to know us best of all. But they don't. What they usually know is the worst of us. The tiny threads of gold which each character possesses are to them unseen. So we show them only our worst side. It is not our fault. We cannot show our real selves before anything less than love and understanding. Thus it is that comparative strangers often appreciate us at our true worth far better than those who believe they know us—especially our limitations—better than we know them ourselves. This lack of understanding between people brought into close proximity to each other is one of the saddest things of life. We are most of us so desperately lonely—lonely because those with whom we have to live and pass our days take us for granted, their estimate being an indifferent one at best. But we ourselves know that there is something within us more wonderful than life has ever given us the chance to prove. Sometimes the occasion arrives when we can really live the dreams which have slumbered within us. Then our friends exclaim, "'Pon my word. I never thought he had it in him!" They certainly never did, and for the most part they give us their praise grudgingly, even when we have proved ourselves better than our worst. But how lonely we live in the midst of these people who judge us by our failures and can never believe that we yearn to do right because once, long ago, we happened to do something wrong. Can it be wondered at, therefore, if sometimes complete strangers know us better—the best of us anyway—than those we hold communion with every day? The people who surround us are usually not the people we would have chosen to be our friends had we the choice. Fate simply cast us among them, and, be-

cause man is more or less a gregarious creature, we effect with them a kind of compromise or truce which they call friendship, but which is a desecration of that most beautiful word.

Real Friends.

THEY are the people we choose for ourselves through life who are our real friends and relations. They are the ones who understand us and love us in spite of much we may do that is ugly and wrong. They are the ones to whom we turn in our misery and woe. They, too, are the ones who when we have risen, not above our true selves but above our average, are not surprised, not incredulous, but just happy in the knowledge that we have proved ourselves worthy of their love and worthy of our ideals too. No wonder these true friends are more to us than those who perchance have known—or rather, "unknown"—us all our lives. No wonder, then, we turn to them instinctively in the great moments of our lives. We cannot live without love, and the heart where love and understanding are is the heart of a friend we have known and loved all our lives—even though we only met him in the flesh yesterday.

The Abnormal.

I ALWAYS feel so sorry for abnormal people. It is so easy to be dull and commonplace, and dulness and commonplaceness is such a happy state—to judge by the blissful self-satisfaction of bores. Nobody *wants* to be different from his fellow men. Loneliness is never enviable—though solitude is often. Besides, there is nothing which makes men so vindictive as to feel that one man or woman is not as ordinary as they are themselves—I mean, of course, ordinary in the sense that they belong to the universal type. The abnormal

person flees through life like a canary being pursued by sparrows. Nobody quite knows why the sparrows always persecute the bird which has escaped its cage, except that it is usually different from the type they are themselves, and a " difference," even in bird-life—which, after the life of the flowers, always seems to me to be nearest to perfect beauty in all creation—makes for enmity and hatred and jealousy and, if possible, death. Of course, there are heaps of people who aren't really abnormal at all, although they are dying to be thought above and apart from the crowd. They kind o' hunt with the hounds and dress up like the hare. They usually create a deep impression *on themselves*. The abnormal people I pity are the people who have been born, as it were, with a " kink " in their natures, people who cannot live the ordinary, law-abiding, moral, and respectable life of the multitude, as the multitude moulds its conduct by laws and religion and social customs. They are the people who suffer. They are the people who are really and cruelly lonely. If they are strong and brave they usually end either as social outcasts or in gaol. If they are weak, they shuffle through life furtively, pretending to be what they are not. And how they suffer—these really abnormal people! In their struggle for self-expression they are never victors. The Commonplace always wins in the long run, decry it as we may. They have the Past, and all the force and traditions of the Past, to uphold them. The Present and the Future have never a chance against the awful bulwarks set up by former generations. People are fond of saying that the Past, because it is past, is dead. I tell you the Past is of more account than all the Present schemes and Future plans put together with the whole German Army behind them. Just try and fight against those things which a dead epoch has sanctioned and you will see.

The Future.

And the abnormal are always up in arms against the Past. That is what makes their struggle futile so often. We pretend that because we happen to live and eat and believe—we are alive. I tell you that the average person is as "*dead*" as the proverbial door-nail. They think, act, and believe as the preceding generation thought, acted, and believed. Their mental vision is turned wholly towards the Past. The Present and the Future never concern them. Their one fight is to preserve what is Dead. They hug to their bosoms the things which are old and for the most part useless, like molluscs cling to the rock on which they find themselves. *Ideas* are things which belong to the Future; that is why Ideas are so unpopular and so hated. The man who would make the world a better, happier, more humane State is the man who is chastised with scorpions. It is as if the Past struck through the Present at the Future which declares that it was all wrong. There are no men as powerful as Dead men. A generation lives never so vitally as when it has passed away. The abnormal seem to belong to the Future; they hint of change; they bring to the Human Mind possibilities which the Human Mind in its "deadness" dreads as a judgment on its own futility. The man who lives differently from his neighbour is, as it were, a living criticism of him—and an adverse one. Things which the ordinary man finds different from the ideal he would have them be, finds them utterly and entirely wrong. And the ordinary man thinks that things should be left as he has always found them. To question the Past is to question the Creator, or so it would seem in the minds of the average man and woman. But if the world could forget for one day all the things which have ever been, if the world could have, as it were, a complete loss of memory, there might be some

hope of the Millennium to-morrow. But then, if the world paused for just five minutes *to think*—that *would be the Millennium.*

Those Who Are Different.

It always secretly amuses me to listen to the self-glorification of people at "resisting" temptations which have absolutely no attraction for them. The rich woman who goes into one of the big London stores and puts a pair of silk stockings inside her muff when the shop assistant isn't looking is, if she be discovered, called a kleptomaniac. It is argued that, because she is rich, her theft must be accounted a disease. But the poor woman who steals a pair of boots because she is too poor to provide her child with some in any other way is called a sinner. But of the two I know which one would find a better "cure" for her act in gaol—if gaol ever be a *cure* for anything, which I entirely doubt. In the same way, we hang the man who murders his wife—the woman, dirty and unfaithful, who has wrecked his home and happiness because the Respectable Law-Abiding People have arranged that divorce is beyond the means of a poor man—we hang him unmercifully, while such creatures as would make undue and dishonest profit out of their country because their country is in the throes of a terrible and ghastly war are given a few years' imprisonment, if they are not let off with a fine. But of the two crimes I know which I consider by far the more heinous and which I would punish eternally—if I were God!

The Importance of the Trivial.

I often wonder whether, when the war has become some horrible memory of the past, we shall ever return to that awful importance of the trivial which used to make life such a silly hubbub in the peace days

of long ago. Sometimes I fear we shall. Sometimes I think that such a state of things is inevitable in a world in which the vast majority of one sex lives in petted idleness within, metaphorically speaking, four chintz-papered walls, in the supreme belief that, because she is rich enough to be idle, she must necessarily be of intense value. You will always find that it is the people who lead "little" lives to whom the trivial always comes disguised as the colossal. And the majority of well-to-do women lead very little lives. Of course, many men are also trivial in a different way. They are trivial in their outlook on statesmanship and politics. Their triviality is of an appalling dulness, but at least statesmanship and politics are big things, even if those who practise them are mostly so ignorant of their import in the world as to mistake them both for the wretched programme of some more wretched political party. But women are trivial over very trivial things, and, if there be one thing more boring than another, it is the person who, also metaphorically speaking, rushes towards you in an intense excitement because she has discovered a molehill on a mountain. Men as a rule do at least see big things narrowly—but women see narrow things through the wrong end of a spy glass. Their chief interest seems to be entirely devoted to Sex—Sex in all its variations and in all its blissful belief that it is something eternal and celestial. Oh, the hubbub there is when somebody has been seen actually having lunch with somebody else! Oh, the scandal there is when someone has a baby who ought not to have had one—even though maybe the baby is a particularly fine one, and children without a father are usually their own punishment, if not handicap. Oh, the interest when some woman is not so lovely as she once was—the new hat which does not suit Mrs. B.—all the things, in fact, which are nobody's business except that of the people most concerned.

Ourselves and Others.

And to hear women talk of these things one would believe that the talkers themselves were as far removed from even an inclination to commit any vulgar, but quite natural, error as the earth is removed from the sun. Whereas, we all know that the same weaknesses beset us all, to a greater or less degree. Men know those things of each other, therefore they are usually tolerant; at any rate, there are other things, other faults, other mistakes of far greater world-importance than the little evidences of Sex, which, after all affect the character in the long run as little as does a cold in the head. But the majority of women seem to think that there are only these silly little things in the whole world, and they place the doings of other people before any theory for the uplifting of the world, no matter how urgent be the necessity. I have often wondered how the doings and sayings and taste of Other People can interest women so greatly and for so long. How rarely you ever pass two women in the street without hearing that they are discussing clothes or somebody else. As if anybody really ought to care what other people are doing, who are nothing to them; and as for clothes, most women's dress is merely the outcome of some dressmaker's idea, and belongs to each individual as little as does the architecture of the house in which they live.

Age.

No wonder, then, women feel that their life is over and done with when they discover the first grey hair. Sex life is the shortest and most unsatisfactory life to live for. Besides, Sex is really such a simple matter, of no importance whatever except that men—but for the most part women—have made it so. The sex indiscretions of yesterday—how do they affect your charac-

ter to-day? Not a bit, except as an experience. But, of course, if you look upon that indiscretion as a crime, it becomes important through your own lack of proportion. Besides, an indiscretion usually teaches you that indiscretion is not half so thrilling as you imagined. It was just a momentary weakness, and out of our moments of weakness we often become strong and wise.

Mothers.

I SOMETIMES think that they are the mothers who know to the full the sadness, as well as the pride, of war. Through all their agony of mind there shines a glory which is akin to triumph. I have seen mothers visiting their wounded sons in hospital, absolutely broken by the tragedy which has befallen their child, and yet through all their misery there gleams a mother's pride which I can never see unmoved. That shattered piece of still breathing humanity, which the Army only knew as a "number" and the nurses only regard as a "case," may be nothing to the outsider, who merely looks at him and thinks he would be better dead; but to *her*—his mother—he represents the supreme sacrifice, the supreme renunciation, the great "victory" of the whole war. Her heart is broken, maybe, yet there surges through it the music of an anthem which is akin to happiness.

Great Moments.

IT is strange how, in moments of great potentiality, we *look*, and feel so feebly heroic. "Limelight Heroism" is a dream of the armchair. There is no accompaniment of Big Drums when we are really and truly living through a great crisis of life. A discussion of the Cosmos doesn't interest us in the least when we are standing within the shadow of the Great Mystery. The

little things we abused when nothing very much was happening are dearer to us than all the heroic dreams we ever lived through in imagination when the opportunity for heroism is at hand. The greatest heroes are invariably most unassuming men and women. And this for the simple reason that their acts of heroism look quite small and uninteresting to them. While we are doing nothing, we like to imagine that our Big Deeds will be done in the full glare of the limelight, with, as it were, a flashing sword in our right hand and a look of divine glory in our eyes. The probabilities are, however, that the Big Deeds are over before we realised that we had done them, and that, even while we were doing them, all we thought of, if we thought of them at all, was a fervent wish that they were finished. It is only the outsiders who really and truly see the wonder of Big Deeds. To us, if the deeds were really big, they appeared commonplace, and rather disappointing. They weren't the kind of " big deed " we wanted to do at all. We have not yet had the opportunity to do IT. In the meanwhile, people—tiresome people—are making a great noise over some act which she should scarcely have noticed at all if the world hadn't begun to clap them—acts which we were not at all interested in, and rather bored us at the moment of doing them. The man or woman who, metaphorically speaking, is always winning the V.C. in imagination, usually grumbles when numbers force him to be content with a leg of the chicken. The greatest flag-wagging is usually done by those who have been secreting petrol enthusiastically for the last twelve months, people who grow furious over the sacrifice of a servant through the rising income tax. Noise is nearly always empty—unless, of course, it be a bursting shell, and even then, it is the infantry who will eventually win the day.

Wings.

A CONTENTED mind may possibly be a perpetual feast, but it's an appallingly dull one—like dining with your wife's relations. The man who loves his little corner and requires no other may possibly look marvellously young at sixty, but his society after a time—when you've had enough of his rest cure—is rather like being mixed up in the middle of a cold poultice. Personally I always find a contented, self-satisfied man rather a dull thing; a woman—well, a woman out to conquer new worlds as a rule can't put her hat on straight and is invariably unhooked at the back. In my quiet hours I occasionally wonder whether some of us will eventually get sick even of Paradise—supposing that we get there. The *wanderlust* is such a strange, eerie feeling, and it attacks us at the most uncomfortable moments, so that a man when he ought to be " settling down " is wandering hither and thither, a perfect example of the rolling stone unaccompanied by moss. The happiness of so many people lies in action and not in, metaphorically, sitting down and having their heads stroked, that I often wonder what will happen to these adventurous spirits when they arrive at the soul's destination to remain there for ever and ever. More especially will this be dangerous should the sexes be allowed to find eternal happiness together. For women as a rule are " fireside " all the time; man is only " fireside " in moods. And all sorts of misunderstandings and tears arise from the call to the hearth struggling to drown the call of the wild. They are the cause of more than half the sex wars. For women would legislate to keep men at home just as men always legislate to keep women in it.

The Unruly Spirits.

To clip a man's wings is generally to make him bad. Half the vice in this world is caused not so much

through innate wickedness as from a lack of something enthralling to do. Sport is a far greater moraliser than sermons. The man who is trying to get his handicap down from six to scratch has not time to bother over the peroxide female whose appearance is one violent contradiction of Nature's choice. The woman who has a big interest in life has little inclination to turn flirting and not being found out into a fine art, or grow frumpy and raucous-voiced because she and her sisters are "downtrodden" and none of them have a vote. There's nothing like a busy life for getting people to Heaven, if the way to Heaven is paved, not by temptations which you have faced and overcome, but by temptations which you have never met. I am convinced that the lazy man or woman must be innately stupid and dull if he or she is to remain good; for what, alas! passes in this world for "goodness" is often to dulness near akin. Virtue is a victory, not a flight.

Escape.

It is not so much the excitement of life as its monotony which kills. It is the "rut" along which we wander dully which ages us before our time. The prime of a man's life is forty, but most of us are "stuck" and staid long before thirty-five. We want loosening—mentally and physically. It is not so much the passing of time which makes us middle-aged and old as a mind and body numbed by the orderly succession of everyday things. For most of us, too, there is no escape. It is the price we pay for being a "respectable" member of society with a bank balance behind us, a genteel homestead above us, and a Carrara tomb in front of us. So we pass through life—never having really known anything but that narrow, conventional little side of it which has filled in the background of our provincial existence.

To-morrow.

And most of us are happiest thus. To the unimaginative there is nothing quite so satisfying as a brick wall —especially if they be your bricks and your wall. The need of change, of variety, of strong emotions, of passion, love, excitement, are unknown to them. They find their little niche in life and lie with their head out of it blinking blindly in the sunlight which has long since ceased trying to tempt them to fly away. I know it—because I, too, am one of them. Every year I feel the numbness of environment slowly encompassing me. I have feeble outbursts of protest—the sight of a foreign land, a sudden exhibition of genius, war, history, discovery, give me the pangs of heartbreak—but they do not last, their force diminishes every day. Eggs and bacon and the rate-collector—if I may permit myself such illustrations—bring me—bang!—up against stern reality. To-morrow, I say, I will go away—anywhere, what does it matter? To-morrow I will leave the dreary round of rules and regulations, small talk, and the "proper thing" to be absolutely free, and happy, and young once more. To-morrow . . . to-morrow . . . to-morrow . . . and to-morrow, alas! never comes. Life is one perpetual to-day, and nearly every day is dull. I too, am caught, I suppose, in the woollen skein of civilised things. When I am at last free—I shall be too old. And when I am too old—I shall not be panting after freedom. Nor am I alone in this internal protest against monotony. I have been surprised at the number of people who under the most conventional exterior have longings for liberty and wings. It seems to be that almost everyone is chained to one particular spot—chained by little things as well as by big ones. We try to vindicate our dungeon by speaking disdainfully of vagabonds, of gipsies, of "failures" in life, and "rolling stones." But oh,

for one good roll, say I! After all, it is better to wear out than rust out, and one short hour of glorious life is worth days of living on the prospect of an ever-fleeing morrow. As Mr. Arthur Symons sang :—

Life is a tragic folly;
Let us laugh and be jolly,
Away with melancholy.
Bring me a bunch of holly;
Life is a tragic folly.

And life is every moment passing away, and here we are—"*stuck*"—hypnotised by a "future" which may never come.

Travel.

Considering, then, that most of us are in a "rut" and can't very well help it, it becomes absolutely necessary to escape from time to time from the commonplace into the wilds. Week-ends away from home are not the least good. You only leave your own little "rut" to get into somebody else's. Besides, it is not one's body which needs a holiday so much as one's mind. A week-end with a lunatic might perhaps do some good, but a Saturday to Monday spent in discussing the Irish question and eating other people's food leaves you exactly where you were, plus indigestion. Only friendship—and by friendship I do not mean that "Yes-hasn't-it-been-simply-rotten-weather-Goodbye" kind of friendship, but that divine sympathy, that strange, thrilling flash of understanding which is as rare as it is wonderful—ever excuses any visit whatever except that of duty or utility. After all, to be bored alone is terrible, but to be bored in company is tragic. And it is from boredom that the mind in a "rut" must flee as from the Devil. For mental salvation one must either get right away from everything and everybody, or one must be in the society of

those with whom every quiet chit-chat is as delightful as an adventure. Now this latter is one of those little perfect things which the angels only too rarely let fall from Heaven—besides love is a gift, and the majority of us only possess instinct—so that most wanderers along the dull and dreary way have to find their mental tonic in going right—right away. And some—the poor little band of tragedians who laugh perpetually to prevent themselves from crying—can't even do that except in books. They have just got to tuck themselves up in an easy chair and read about the adventures of others—placing in the vacant place opposite that One whose outstretched arms are probably held entreatingly towards somebody else. And so the long quiet autumn evening passes.

God's Hobby.

I ALWAYS think that gardening must be God's hobby. It is the only human recreation with, as it were, a "soul" in it. There is no "soul" in a collection of butterflies crucified on a piece of cardboard; there is no "soul" in a collection of stamps, though there is less in a collection of tram tickets; there is no "soul" in photography, nor bridge, nor golf, nor embroidery, nor tennis, nor in the tango. But the moment a man sets out to create a garden he is in immediate communication with Heaven. Moreover, gardening is the only hobby wherein a man is sufficient unto himself alone. Most hobbies drag in at least one other person, either as critic, partner, or echo. But a man with a garden needs only faith and a seed catalogue. Alone with his God and the latest publication of Mr. Sutton or Mr. Carter, Heaven hasn't much more to offer him, and the boom of civil war in Ulster sounds like an echo far away against the fact that there is blight on the perennial phlox.

Consolation.

THEREFORE I would say to the bitter of spirit and the unhappy, and to all those for whom life and friendship and love have proved illusions, "Get ye to your garden, and henceforth the only 'hurting' delusion in life will be the failure of the seed to live up to its illustration in the catalogue." But perhaps the whole secret lies in the fact that gardening is a hobby which needs your spare time all the time, and that no agony of regret can enter a mind in which every waking moment is spent in doing or making up for what has been left undone. For a garden is never finished; that is its engrossing charm. Over a collection of books or a collection of beetles only a limited portion of time can be spent, while golf loses much of its fascination when the sun has sunk to rest and no living person is at hand to hear how you foozled your drive at the ninth tee. But a man infatuated with his garden has no time for any relaxation except sleeping and eating. The moment he becomes slack signs of his negligence become only too apparent. His work is really never done. But hope and the promise held out by Mr. Sutton and Mr. Carter bear him along until the time comes when every moment not spent outside upon his knees seems like time uselessly thrown away. And always he is being purified and made simpler and nearer to God, as all of us are who work with nature amid beauty. I wonder if any gardener has ever been really bad; or rather I wonder whether it is possible for a man to remain unregenerate and wicked who really loves his garden. It seems to me that if they turned criminals out upon a rose patch instead of making them pick oakum the work of regeneration—which is the aim of justice—would be far speedier and more lasting in its effect.

Nature Lovers.

But you are either born a nature-lover or you are not, and no amount of knowledge concerning sap and roots, nor all the longest Latin names which were ever given to the tiniest plants, will necessarily make you one. It is more a question of "feeling" than anything else, and though you may not know the name of a single flower in the garden, nor the song note of any bird, nor the name of any single tree, you may yet be a truer Child of Nature than he who can give you information about anything from weeds to the mating manœuvres of penguins. You are not necessarily a lover of nature simply because you are able to translate that love into language. Some of the greatest poets are mute. Shakspere is Shakspere not so much because he revealed new thoughts and new longings, but because he gave voice to the thoughts which had not been spoken and the longings which had never been expressed.

The Test of Depth.

A person who can be artificial in a garden is a person beyond the hope of prayers. Sometimes I think that the country is a sure test of the "depth" which a man or woman possesses. You may sit and talk with them for hours in their town houses, and still remain uncertain as to whether they have anything "in them" or are merely conversationally inflated gas bags. But put them in a garden, put them in the country, and, if there is anything in them at all—*it will out*! So I have always found that a garden-lover is a man who is something so very much more than a believer in the fact that what hits him is necessarily wrong, that those who are poor are puny, and that truth began in the Book of Genesis.

Sorrow.

Sorrow—real, poignant sorrow—must be fought out alone. Later on there comes a time when its first agony is spent, when the blackness of the soul is less sombre in its hue. Of course, there are some tears which can never be forgotten. But later on we learn to smile; the whirligig of life catches us up once more. Superficially, the sorrow might never have been. Yet, no one knows what scars remain so long as life lasts—scars which lie hidden from the world behind the cheerfulness of those who, according to their friends, have "quite recovered from their grief." Still, there comes a time when the sorrow lies behind us in the long-ago, when Nature and Beauty and Interests give to the saddest heart a certain consolation and hope. It is strange, however, how little "other people" contribute to this recovery; "other people" nearly always *hurt*. It may be, perhaps, because they will always *talk* so much. Flowers are so exquisite and so silent. Animals are so friendly. They cannot break in upon our peace. Nature is so busy with her own concerns that only to watch her helps to take us out of ourselves. It is strange how, in our greatest woe, we always turn to silent things—hilltops, our garden, books, pictures, or a dog. If a man, or woman, finds consolation from his sorrow by always talking about it—be sure his tragedy will not weigh him down for very long. I often wonder why it is that Nature and Books and Music have this power to bring balm to the troubled heart.

The Consolations of Nature.

Nature is not at all interested in our woe. She is perfectly indifferent to our grief, and yet she is not callous. It may be, that she always seems to give us a welcome when we seek it. Or, again, it may be that in knowing

absolutely nothing of our pain—that alone is a relief. She does not go about on tip-toe and keep asking us if we would like some sal volatile. She is simply very beautiful and frightfully busy, and the combination entrances us and holds our attention at the same time. I always feel sorry for those people who do not love scenery and animals and birds. They miss a great charm and a very great interest in life. Even to read about them is a joy. If I could not have a garden I should like to keep a menagerie on a hill-top. I should never worry in the least because the parson's wife never called upon me as long as I had some dogs, a horse, heaps of tame birds, and perhaps a donkey—or, failing these, an herbaceous border, a rock garden, and a cabbage patch. I should know that these things would afford me far more unalloyed delight. Nature never twaddles.

On Truancy in Big Things.

Take it fom me; the man or woman who has never played truant from the ideal for which he lives is just a human lentil—with all the dulness of that estimable and most uninteresting vegetable. It is the man and woman who, having fallen, rise again who get there at the end of time. Sometimes I rather fancy that we have to fall in order to rise, but Tennyson has, of course, put that idea into some haunting lines in "In Memoriam." At any rate, the person whose character and temperament never lead him into temptation, who is content, and more than content—smugly self satisfied—to go on day in, day out, being dully respectable —respectability founded upon no personal conviction but merely upon an inherited tradition—will never reach any great heights. He may not fall, but he certainly will not rise, and his life will be merely one long jog-trot between blinkers along the Dull Road of Conventionality which leads from the Congress of Old

Women into the Kingdom of Deathless Yawns. Give me the arena rather than the front row of reserved seats—no matter how expensive—every single time. In the arena things are happening. The living crowd has no time, nor inclination, to point out to other men their misdeeds—not sympathetically, not even with the proffer of a helping hand, but merely impertinently—impertinence, illumined by the inner light of its own self-righteousness. I ask of no man or woman other things than their good-fellowship, than their laughter, than their love. If I fail of my best the fault is mine; also, in me alone, is my punishment—if I am worthy of being punished. Having made mistakes I shall the better understand the mistakes of others, and so more readily forgive them. As I look back upon my life I really regret very little that I have done. I have done many, many things of which I am heartily ashamed—but shame is no unhealthy sentiment. On the contrary, it is through shame that we purge ourselves of much of the heart's dross. Shame only becomes soul-deadening when it is turned to fury by the condemnation of people whose temptations are not ours, can never be ours. It is so easy to condemn stealing from the security of five thousand a year; it is not difficult to sneer at frailty when we possess no imagination and less heart; it is even agreeable to boast our fighting ardour when we are forty-two.

On Truancy in Little Things.

But this, after all, is truancy in big things. It is truancy in little things which add a delight to life's otherwise deadly dull day. How pleasant it is not to live up occasionally to the precepts we propound—to stay in bed all day on Sunday or put the chain on the door and our feet in the fender and, in vulgar parlance, not to care a hang "if it snows ink." We are invariably better for it. It is not good for people to

be too good—always. A little falling away is very pleasant, and it also purifies. The people who can never throw their bonnets over the windmill and take a flying leap over it as well, if no one is looking, are dull company indeed. I know a few of these people—people who make rules for themselves and follow them relentlessly from their life's beginning to their life's dull end. I flee from them as from the sight of a relation heaving in sight when I want particularly to be by myself and dream. Their company is of the sparkling quality of stagnant water on a cloudy day. They not only seem to have made rules of conduct for every moment of the day, but they also appear to have given unto themselves rules of conversation. A man or woman who never dabbles in the "unexpected" never by any chance says anything which has not been said millions of times before, and in just the same way. But after all, it is not their fault, perhaps. If you once confine your ideas and actions within certain limits you have shut yourself up in a box for all time. Besides, you rob life of one of its happiest opportunities—experience. And without experience, I take no one's opinion about anything—whether it be a moral opinion, or merely a worldly one. After all, why should I? You have to experience in order to understand failure with love or pity—the only real understanding. I would just as soon listen to a fat stockbroker in a London club showing me how he would win the war as pay the least attention to the praise or condemnation of one who had no experience from which to criticise my line of conduct.

The Really Understanding.

Of course, there are a few wonderful souls who somehow seem able to understand without ever having been through the same ordeal. But they are people of wonderful imagination and heart. Also, they are rare!

Also, they are never prim! Probably they are "untidy," either in appearance or in mind, or, perhaps, both. But there is something about them which understands the yearning and the disappointments of other people as if by instinct, and to them the anxious or unhappy will turn as a flower turns towards the sun. I often wonder what it is that gives these rare people their wonderful sympathy for all the suffering humanity of this world. More often than not they are superficially so bright, so apparently without a care or sorrow in the whole wide world. Perhaps it is this intense human love of theirs which shines out upon the world. They smile—but it is not the smile of the multitude; they laugh—but their laughter is not the laughter of the crowd; they are gay, but their gaiety is not the gaiety of those who heed not. Through everything they do and say there is a sympathy, an understanding, and love which speaks to our hearts like the lilt of a song. They laugh with us; they cheer us; they make us forget.

Sympathy.

But behind it all we *know* that they are giving us hope; bringing us consolation; wiping away our tears. It is sympathy, and it is a very marvellous gift. A gift. . . . No; rarely, very rarely, a gift. For you will find that the one who has brought consolation and laughter into your life has usually very little laughter—very little consolation in his own. He has learnt through the dull ache of misery to sympathise and understand. He has not cried his trouble to Heaven for all the world to hear. He has just gone on eating his heart out alone—always alone. But in his loneliness he has learnt the one great secret of life—a secret which no man or woman can put into words, a secret which can only be told through the clasp of the hand, through a kiss, through the smile which fights

through tears, bidding the unhappy be brave. And those who are unhappy will know such a one as if by instinct. To those who are happy, to those whose sorrows are passing, he will appear merely frivolous and gay. They only realise sympathy when it comes to them on tip-toe with a smelling-bottle in one hand and a handkerchief in the other. But the grief which needs a smelling-bottle is always a passing grief, and the great griefs of life are the griefs which only few people ever knew, griefs which lie buried in our aching hearts, the while we hide them from the curiosity of the world behind a fine pretence of happiness and smiles.

Books.

And books have this gift of sympathy and understanding as well as these rare people. Mostly they are sad books, books of revolt, books by men who have fought the world and lost. But because the authors have known the cleansing fires of unhappiness which can never be told, they are like a hand stretched out to us across the waste of loneliness which is our life. Because they have failed, because they have suffered, because they died fighting—they are like ourselves. We feel they understand, they sympathise, they *know*. Thus I can read a few of my favourite books—"Amiel's Journal," Shelley, "Wuthering Heights," parts of Tennyson and Browning and Walt Whitman, "Cranford," Jeffreys, Pascal, Edgar Allan Poe—when I *cannot* read the Bible. The Bible is a book of Hope—mostly a purely personal hope; but soul-misery is pessimism turned into a melody, and when the soul is sad, hope sinks very low. In the great sorrows of life we do not need the consoler; we need the hand-clasp of someone who is suffering too—someone who knows that for us there can be no real consolation, nothing but just the renewal of strength to enable us to go on

playing Life's Lets-Pretend. Real men and women yearn for understanding; they loathe pity.

Amiel.

Thus I can read the Book of Job again and again when I cannot read the Prophecies. I can read "Amiel's Journal" when I cannot read the Epistles. I can read "Wuthering Heights" when I cannot read the Psalms. I can exchange confidences and hopes with a social pariah when I cannot talk to a Pillar of the Church. I suppose I am morally hopeless. Yet, there are times when—or so it seems to me—you don't *want* the divine consolation of someone bending down towards you from a height, but just the friendly understanding and affection of someone wandering with you down in the "depths." Hand in hand, men can often rise on their dead selves to better things; but they rarely reach the Promised Land when they are *pulled* up, never when they are *pushed.* Yet the world is full of "pullers" and "pushers," and they do very little real good in spite of the perspiration which is running down from them in their moral pursuit of others. For no good was ever done without love—I do not mean, of course, the love of man for a woman, but the love of those who are like ourselves—weak, with moments of superhuman strength; bad, with sudden gleams of an almost divine goodness. And this love is very humble, and it never preaches. And it is this love which alone makes the world a better, happier, gentler place. To quote from Amiel: "Who knows if love and its beatitude, clear manifestation as it is of the universal harmony of things, is not the best demonstration of a fatherly and understanding God, just as it is the shortest road to reach Him. Love is a faith, and one faith leads to another. And this faith is happiness, light, and force. Only by it does man enter into the series of loving, the awakened, the happy, the re-

deemed—of those true men who know the value of existence. . . . Perhaps it is through love that I shall find my way back to faith, to religion, to energy, to concentration. It seems to me, at least, that if I could but find my work-fellow and my destined companion, all the rest would be added unto me, as though to confound my unbelief and make me blush for my despair."

Each Age has a Charm.

Each age is charming and delightful in a charming and delightful person. It is just as easy to be a bore at eighty as eighteen. Alas! most people are seemingly quite content to sink into lumps of unresponsive fat requiring endless attention. They let themselves go in mind, body, and sympathies, and consider that, because they have lived more than three score years and ten, they are entitled to make slaves of a younger generation. When they do not get it, or only get it grudgingly, they send forth to Heaven deafening outbursts against the selfishness of men and women. But if you want friendship, and sympathy, and love you must try to deserve it as strenuously in one age as in another. And the man (or woman) who tries to make himself lovable will be loved whether he is merely a "chit" or as antique as Methuselah. A pleasant, kindly, sympathetic smile is the most profitable investment from the cradle to the grave, no matter whether it be shed upon emperors or waiters. You may be quite sure that it wasn't Ninon de l'Enclos's legs which got her a lover at eighty, nor Helen Troy's beauty which made her devastating to masculine hearts at an age when most women are more terrified of fat than of the anger of God.

On Getting to Know People.

I DO wish that the majority of people weren't so surrounded by ice. One goes on hacking away at them—hacking away at them—for weeks and months and years and then, when one is all but weary of the fight, you suddenly come upon the living, human creature underneath—*to find they're bores.* The other Sunday morning I lay cosily tucked up in bed dreaming of not getting up when I suddenly heard the milkman jangling down the street. He stopped at the house opposite, and I overheard the following dialogue. "Hello!" he said, "Where av' you popped up from?" "I," replied the servant, who was apparently polishing up the front-door bell, "I came 'ere yesterday. Yer th' milkman, I suppose?" "Roite fust time," he replied. "I'm th' milkman, and I likes the look of you! Would yer like ter drive owt wiv me this afternoon?" "I ain't free till four o'clock," she informed him, as if immediately to go driving with a complete stranger was the occurrence of a very everyday. "That don't matter," he assured her, "I'll be waiting for yer at the end of th' street at four sharp!" "Right O," she answered. And off he went.

Breaking the Ice.

IN a higher stratum of society unfortunately one must wade through hours of the English weather, days of theatres and books, and weeks discussing mutual acquaintances before one can safely suggest even a picture gallery, followed by tea. It is all very tiresome and very dull, and very dreary and totally unnecessary. Now if one could go up to a person and remark, "*You're* alone and *I'm* alone, and though I don't admire your face much there's a twiddy bit about the corner of your mouth which makes me want to know

you better, and in any case there is no possible harm done if we go for a walk, is there? " how much more delightful and amusing life would be. As it is one must wade through miles of conventional questions and trite answers before one can even hope to get a glimpse of the real behind the sham, and—conventional questions and trite answers—oh, I can quite easily imagine people dying of both.

Over the Sea and Far Away.

I OFTEN wonder why, after a certain age, just a few things—innocent in themselves—give you a sudden feeling of " heart-break." To each man and woman their own unsatisfied longings, but to me there are few things which upset me so greatly as to see a big passenger steamer leaving port for the open sea. This thing I cannot bear. It makes me more restless, more sad, then I can express. Yet there are people—hundreds of them—who take the incident as a form of entertainment, the while they hang on to the rails nearest the quay of departure to gape at, or ridicule, or pass impertinent remarks upon the people saying " good-bye." There are people—again to be counted in their hundreds—who love to crowd Victoria, or Charing Cross, or Waterloo stations in order to gape at soldiers leaving for " somewhere in France," never, perhaps, to return. It is not patriotism nor sympathy which brings them there. It is merely idle curiosity —idle curiosity thirsting for a free spectacle. To these people there is nothing sad in such a sight—sad beyond any words of mine to express. They cannot see the pathetic glory of these men going out to fight, and perhaps to die; or maybe return, after many weeks of nightmare, shattered in body and mind. They gaze with interest at the weeping men and women left behind as one gazes with interest at a tragedy on the stage which one knows is merely make-believe. To

them it is simply a chance of seeing an uncommon incident in an utterly commonplace life—an incident from which, when it is over, they will return with graphic descriptions of it to the members of their family, thus charging with excitement the otherwise dreary atmosphere of a fat tea. They are the kind of people who will stand aghast in sympathy before a blinded soldier and tell him how indescribably awful is his affliction. It is not that these people have no heart, nor sympathy—though both must necessarily be shallow to allow them to do such things—it is mainly because they have no imagination. They do not understand; they have not the heart to see.

Imagination.

Well, after all, perhaps Imagination *is* a curse as well as a blessing. Lack of it makes one blind to so many things that hurt—and hurt—and go on hurting! Sometimes I wish that I had less—or more. But alas! —like so many people—I have just enough to add 100 per cent. to suffering, and not enough to become a great writer of fiction. Mine is the kind of imagination which sees other people's troubles far more vividly than they see them themselves, and faces its own with the dreary resignation that nothing wonderful lasts, nothing longed for will ever be realised, nothing, as far as we ourselves are concerned—really matters. There is no satisfaction in this kind of imagination, and it spells *Unhappiness* in capital letters and a mile high. With Amiel we cry, "Ah! how terrible spring is to the lonely! All the needs which had been lulled to sleep start into life again, all the sorrows which had disappeared are reborn, and the old man which had been gagged and conquered rises once again and makes his groans heard. It is as though all the old wounds opened and bewailed themselves afresh. Just when one had ceased to think, when one had succeded in

deadening feeling by work or by amusement, all of a sudden the heart, solitary captive that it is, sends a cry from its surrounding prison depths, a cry which shakes to its foundations the whole surrounding edifice."

The Human "Turnip."

Better have the imagination of a human "turnip" than this. For it is worth nothing to yourself or the world, and it adds to the excruciating tortures of life a hundredfold. It is this kind of imagination which forces people to "live for others"—suffer with them, laugh with them, anticipate for them all their troubles and their woes. And to "live for others," alas! mostly ends in "living by oneself." People, as a rule, don't want other people "living for them." They are tiresome. Sooner or later there comes a moment when they tell them so. That is where people of imagination suffer. Imagination has driven them towards other people in distress. Imagination sits with them when their day of usefulness is done, painting for them the loneliness of their very lonely future, and ruthlessly shattering all the little castles of cards which the heart had built up so unselfishly. So they suffer, and grow drearily wise—and there hasn't been a single incident in all their joy and disillusion about which they could write a novel. Thus, as I said before, if you can't be a J. M. Barrie—go down on your knees and pray Heaven to make you a fat, thick-skinned human "turnip." Thus only will life be livable.

Good-bye.

But, of course, Heaven won't make you a nice fat human "turnip" if it hasn't made you one already—when, of course, you won't know you are a "turnip," and so won't worry. That is its cruelty, or the beauty of its design—whichever way you look at it.

It will just let you go on being lonely and letting you suffer, while telling you of the splendour of "cleansing fires," without adding the fact that very often these "cleansing fires" eventually burn you up. But if you are very determined, or have become hopeless or cynical, it will allow you to pretend that nothing may happen to you, or to those you love, will matter any more; life is very brief, and, in one hundred years—who will care? So you crush down everything which you know would make life worth the living and show a fine presence of cheerful pretence to the world. Then suddenly without warning, unperceived—the whole edifice of artificial "joy" will topple over and fall. And it may be such a little thing which will cause it—the lilt of a song, a memory, a resemblance, a wonderful view, a perfect night, the sight of a strong man in pain, the picture of a mother and her child; the pathos of youth going out to die, and—as in my own case—the fast-fading outline of a ship heading for the open sea.

Memories.

Memories are an unbreakable tie. People who can sit over the fire during the long autumn evenings *remembering* are very near one to the other. To have gone through the same tragedy, to have shared the same joys, to have laughed over the same jokes—these things make for unity among otherwise most ill-assorted couples. They link whole families together, they form a bond between friends. Passion is fleeting, so is the intoxication of the first days of friendship. These things pass. But as they pass they leave behind them a trail of memories—sweet, bitter, grave and gay—which the future can never efface, which no length of separation can altogether wipe out. We may quarrel, grow cold, or say good-bye, but the words, "Do you remember," never fail to stir the ashes of the past into

a temporary renewal of life. As we grow old we lose touch with many things. We cannot make new friends. We cannot entirely enter into the lives of the generation which is growing up. And why? Because, between them and us there are no ties of memory. We cannot store up the trivial little hopes, loves, and tendernesses "to amuse us when we are old, dear," with people whose life lies ahead of them, who are still ascending the hill, not standing, as we are, on the crest or wandering through the quiet slopes of the other side. So each generation clings to itself. With our contemporaries we never feel ourselves old. Age is only a terrible thing to the very young. Youth always demands such tremendous things. One must have lived long to be able to appreciate the happy thrill of the fireside.

Recollections.

I ALWAYS think that one of the saddest moments of middle age must be, not the knowledge that life lies behind one, but the realisation that one never really lived it when young life walked by one's side. The happy times one has missed! The dull things one has accomplished in order to stand well with a pompous neighbour! These things matter not at all when one is middle-aged. Youth is so frightened. It lives in terror of the preceding generation. Only when it is too late does it wake up to the realisation that it has been "done." The consequence is that the memories we store up "to amuse us when we are old, dear," aren't half so exciting or interesting or thrilling as they might be and as they certainly would be if we could keep our knowledge of what is essential and what is simply "rot," and begin our lives all over again. Nobody minds paying for having played, but most of us have to pay just because we refused to play. That makes memory often so bitter.

Age.

MIDDLE-AGE would be robbed of half its misery were we always every bit as old as—alas!—we sometimes look. But often we aren't. Some people are antique at twenty; others could—were they given half a chance—skip about like young lambs at forty-five. Fright keeps most of us sedate. The old-at-twenty have no patience with the young-at-forty, and, if the truth must be told—the young-at-forty have not much patience with themselves. They realise that they must *look* ridiculous even though they don't *feel* so. The majority of them strive to compromise matters by dyeing their hair red, going to a good dressmaker, and sitting with their back fully turned towards the light. Thus they try to cheat themselves. Thus they try to cheat others. Alas! they fail in both instances. For the legs *will* persist in being forty even when the heart only feels like fifteen; while other people are *never* deceived. They have always added ten years to your age ever since you ceased to be a *debutante*, so they all know that you *can't be a day under fifty* even when you're really only thirty-nine. The young have only a secret pity for middle-age, and middle-age has usually "no patience" with people of their own age.

St. Martin's Summer.

IF only the mind and the body grew old together, things would be well. But they don't It always takes five years for the young to realise that they are young, and another five years for the middle-aged to realise that they are middle-aged; while youth, as a rule, scarcely notices, until too late, that it *is* young and middle-age alone realises and understands what a wonderful—a wonderful and beautiful—thing is *youth*. Can you blame the middle-aged, then, if they often do the things at forty which they ought to have done at

twenty—but were far too frightened and shy to do? Far more than youth does middle-age need to be careless and brave. They have to squeeze into a few years —oh, so few!—all the splendid moments which experience has shown them really count. The world will laugh and jeer and despise them, but what matter? The world will always laugh and jeer and despise you for everything you do which you really want to do. Have you not often noticed how people between forty and fifty break loose? It is their last flutter. After it is over they can fold their wings, grow old dully and become fat. For most of us only realise what life can mean when we are becoming too decrepit to live it. No wonder, then, the middle-aged often live life in a hurry. They have no time to lose, and experience has taught them to snap their fingers at the world. They seize the moment, knowing that it is their last chance of living, and that life is often nothing but alas-and-alas—even when you keep every one of the Ten Commandments and go to church twice every Sunday.

Humour.

A MUTUAL sense of humour is more binding than a mutual ideal. People who have once had a good laugh together can never afterwards be real enemies. Laughter levels things, somehow. It gives to everything a sense of proportion—and lack of a sense of proportion is more devastating to happiness than sin. I have known people who having had a tiff with one of their friends when they were very young, are still nursing their ire when they are eighty. I know two sisters whose husbands once quarrelled and who, though they have both been widows for many years, still keep up the feud, which had nothing whatever to do with them. It is very strange this state of mind which can nurse anger, no matter how trivial the cause, through the whole of life. I am sure that a person with the

least vestige of a sense of humour could not possibly be so silly. It is only the dull who pride themselves upon the strength and endurance of their hate. How people can quarrel over politics or religion, or because one of their friends looked the other way when she was walking with the local "duchess," I have never been able to understand. I could not really be bothered. There is only one point of view to be fought against, and that is the point of view which believes that it is its destiny to convert and reform *you*. I could not hate it, but it is tiresome and impertinent and so ought to be snubbed. But I have known men who have not spoken to each other for years and years, not because one of them ran away with the other's wife, or even his cook, but simply because he happened to criticise in a Billingsgatian manner the political ideas of Mr. Gladstone. As for the church people who won't have anything to do with the chapel, and the chapel people who put the devil and Roman Catholics in the same saucepan and boil both, and the Conservatives who try to ruin the Radicals and the Socialists who heap coals of fire upon everybody who keeps a carriage—they are the kind of people for whom wars are beneficial, and they are the only ones. It must be so tiresome and so tiring to hate people for their ideas. I could hate them for their actions readily enough, but for what they believe—oh, that must be hideously wearisome. Yet how many people there are who make their own lives miserable, and everybody else's too, by such a waste of mental energy.

Good-byes.

If people in their desire to describe Paradise would go into fewer ecstasies over golden streets, perpetual praise, gates of pearl, eternal sunshine, harps, angels and crowds of the "blessed"—all the unimaginative paraphernalia, in fact, of a very blatant and uninter-

esting heaven—and told us more insistently that in heaven there were no Farewells, I, for one, would feel more inclined to go without the pleasant, but apparently wicked, things of this sad old world to deserve a place therein. For, to my mind, Farewells are among the saddest things in all human life. And my life—and I guess that almost everybody's life has the same sad story to tell—has been one endless Good-bye—good-bye to the things I most cherished, the ideals I believed in most steadfastly, the illusions I hugged most desperately to my soul, the friends I loved more than any in the world. Sometimes I fancy that the wise man and woman just love people and things in a cold, impersonal kind of way. The moment they become part of your inner life, the moment they mean something more to you than you can put into words, even to yourself, Fate steps in, either to place a lighted bomb under the Cherished Belief or presents to the Best Beloved a ticket for the other end of the earth. Is there anything more grimly painful than suddenly to wake up to find that the ideals for which you strove have proved but an illusion after all; that the friend who made this world less a desert of crowded loneliness than you dare realise has one foot on board ship bound, metaphorically speaking, for the farthest corner of the Antipodes? And of all Farewells, the Farewell by sea is the saddest and most painful. Death is not half so sad. The Beloved Dead always seem near to us. It is as if They stood in the silence beyond the horizon waiting for us with arms outstretched—waiting for the moment when we, too, shall have crossed the Great Divide. The Dead, too, are always faithful. Not for Them is Time the Great Consoler. They are watching over us waiting for us; They always remember; They will never, never forget. Somehow we seem *to feel* Them near us. We seem to *know* that They are at hand, that They wander with us—oh, such a little way apart.

Separation.

But the friend who still lives—the friend who, to all intents and purposes, as far as companionship is concerned, might just as well be dead—that is the friend who really seems beyond recall. For, say what we will, Friendship carried on from the other ends of the earth becomes at last merely a memory—a beautiful, sad, a wonderful memory, but a memory which—and I wonder if you will understand me?—is a very, very lonely memory, faint, shadowy, as unsubstantial as a happy dream. For Friendship—real Friendship—is trouble shared, happiness mingled, jokes understood, interests known; it is the laughter, the sadness, the joy, the hundred and one little things of daily life, all bound together, by some mysterious and wonderful undercurrent of sympathy and understanding which makes two people feel that, amid all the noise and bustle, the selfiishness and cruelty of this world, they still possess someone whose affection is steadfast and true, whose love is like the warm handshake of Understanding stretching out towards them across the cold and the darkness of life. And although, if it be true Friendship, it will never cease to live, time and a long separation will dim its lustre. Time and absence in this life are far more "separating" than Death itself. For Time brings to each one of us new interests, new enthusiasm, new attractions. And friends, separated by long distance, cannot share these things—the bond of so much in Friendship. Letters are but the poorest substitute for the daily communion which once made the lives of two people seem to each one of them so precious. The hours of misery, the moments of joy, the hopes, the doubts, illness, health, disappointment, difficulties, cannot be shared by two people from the opposite ends of the earth. So Time gently separates them far more than Death itself. All that remains is the Happy Time long ago—the Happy Time

which is now to each but a memory, a memory which somehow or other seems less real than the trivial interests and companionship of To-day. It takes two people of almost superhuman steadfastness to remain absolutely faithful through a long separation. Faithful?—in a way, yes; but, alas! in a very casual way at last. Love and Friendship both need a certain amount of propinquity. Absence eats at length into the foundations of every Temple erected by two hearts. Time numbs all things. And this, alas! is true, even if none the less sad, because, logically maybe, Time is very kind.

Faith.

I WISH that I had Faith. People who are born with an infinite capacity for believing what they want to believe possess an inner happiness which no other philosophy can possibly give them—and of what good is philosophy if it does not breed an inward peace? Not that people of infinite Faith are pleasant people to live with. Usually their "touchiness" is in equal ratio to their inability to prove what they yearn to call The Truth. They may have the Faith to remove mountains, but if you dare hint that the mountain is still there in spite of their faith, their immediate endeavour is to try and remove you—off the face of the globe, for preference! But this is all by the way. I wish I had faith to believe in the divine right of kings. I wish I had faith to believe in the Human Brotherhood of Politicians. I wish that I had faith to believe in the regeneration of the Western World through this war. I wish I believed in the superiority of clergymen over the sinner they exhort to repentance. I wish that I believed in the Angels of Mons. I wish that I believed in Love which is true till Death and long, long afterwards. I wish that I believed in Friendship which would still love and seek to understand even after

failure and disgrace. I wish I believed in the virtue of Capital. I wish I believed in the honesty of Labour. I wish I believed in Mrs. Pankhurst. I wish I believed in the unselfish patriotism of all those who wear armlets. I wish that I believed that the crowds cheering the soldiers who pass meant anything more than an hysterical emotion, and that the pride and love they manifest would endure and grow stronger after the war is over and the guns are still. I wish I believed in the smiling young ladies who, in fancy dress, have their photographs taken doing agricultural work and other labour of men. I wish I believed in the conventional Heaven—though I'm glad I don't believe in the conventional Hell.

The New Medicine.

THERE are some people who, having pointed out the absurdity of the story of Jonah and the whale, imagine that they have successfully destroyed all the foundations of religion. Because Genesis contradicts itself and many of the sayings of Christ were previously spoken by Confucius, they consider that that alone is sufficient for every church to be shut up and Humanity made better by Parliament and Socialistic doses of Pure Reason. They cannot realise that Faith and Belief are inherent in human nature, and that, were the Bible story exploded and St. Peter's at Rome turned into a Palace of Peace, the silent obeisance to a Supreme Being would still go on. I sometimes listen to the Atheists tub-thumping in Hyde Park, and a brave show they make of it. There is a certain speaker whose burlesque of the average clergyman's diction is funnier than anything heard in the music-halls, and the effect of his ridicule "gets right there" every time. But nothing ever comes of his tirade against God and the Church. If there is far less dogma in

the world than formerly—for which heaven be thanked —there is every bit as much religion. Though Reason laughs at Daniel and the lions and the turning of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, the heart still has its dreams, and an inner consciousness whispers that the unrealisable may nevertheless be true. For this Inner Consciousness—or rather this consciousness within a conscience—continues to believe and have faith long after reason has rejected symbolic fairy tales as rubbish. It is only recently too that this Inner Consciousness has found its champions. The science of psychology is as yet in its infancy, and things more wonderful than any secrets of the laboratory may one day be discovered. The subject is one of the most important and most fascinating of all human problems, because through it may lie that justification for belief in Eternal Life which the Church is failing to give at a time when Humanity is asking for something more definite than assertion.

Social Conventions.

I OFTEN wonder why women have made laws concerning things they must do or must not do. I don't mean laws with regard to the sexes—they are right enough—but laws with regard to conduct in everyday affairs. Mr. A. goes into the saloon bar because he feels thirsty, and being there, and feeling talkative, exchanges opinions with the other frequenters of the bar. Mrs. A., being thirsty, would sooner die than be seen even lingering outside the door of a public-house. She goes to a teashop, where she sits in frigid disapproval of other women. As soon as it is dusk she must return home—nobody knows exactly why, except that she must not be seen in the streets after dark. She would be in no immediate danger if she stayed out all night, unless she deliberately ran into it; but then, Mrs. Grundy never thought of that. She

is not supposed to see the life which darkness brings with it. But, of course, she *has* seen it, and knows all about it. Yet, not until she is verging on ninety will she be allowed to mention her knowledge. The pose is that if a woman sees certain things she will be shocked—but *that* won't hurt her! Public Opinion believes, I think, that, should she know of certain sides of life, she will immediately rush into them; the only safeguard being to keep her ignorant until she is fat and elderly—when nobody will care, apparently, what she knows. It isn't exactly complimentary, but then the world is full of the theory that you are necessarily good if you are deliberately locked away from all signs of evil. So women move round and round in a narrow circle set by themselves and their menkind, and anything outside it comes through to them in a second-hand manner, just so much and no more as the person thinks is good for her. Now, if you live in a camp surrounded by barbed wire like sheep, the desire is to become like all the other sheep. There is no hope for it. A sheep is never supposed to wander alone even among a meadow gay with daisies. It must always have another sheep with it to keep it company. Should it desire to wander, with no matter how innocent intent, Farmer Grundy immediately comes after it with a very big stick. No wonder, then, that there is a feeling of "edginess" in the pinfold. If you can't get away from your surroundings from time to time you can never get outside them, as it were, to develop a sense of criticism.

To Be Alone.

But alas! for most of us, with our conventional duties and our work and our responsibilities, we cannot find the chance to get away from our little "rut" in life. The moment we begin to show signs of restiveness the "neighbourhood" begins to flutter, and,

however much we may scream to live our own life, the "neighbourhood" nearly always wins. So the only way in which we can get out of it, and, as it were, review it from a hilltop, is to go away by ourselves, not necessarily into loneliness, but far from anyone we have been in the habit of associating with, far from the ordinary faces we have seen so often that we literally cease to "see" them any more. Personally, I think there is nothing more refreshing than the day when nobody comes to call. Oh the blessing of not having to listen to someone's opinion of the war or the doings and sayings of people in whom one has not the least interest. I have got to the age when I realise that one has to feel extremely well, and consequently philosophic towards the minor ills of life, in order to remain blandly cheerful in the society of those people with whom one has shown no desire to become better acquainted. To alter a popular ditty :—

They're bored,
And we're bored,
So *why should we worry?*

The Possessors of a Friendly Host.

On the other hand, these are usually the kind of people who are never bored. They pride themselves upon loving their fellow-creatures, and having hosts of friends. These are the people whose only moments of boredom are when they are forced to fill half-an-hour with their own society. You, personally, are only an adjunct to their own happiness, nothing more. If *you* are not "at home," some other member of their friendly host will be. That is all that matters. They invaded your home first because you have a silly way of pretending to look pleased over anecdotes which, in reality, do not interest you in the least. So you are the first victim. "I have so enjoyed your chat," they cry at the end of two hours' monologue about their

personal interests. Perhaps they have. On the other hand, it may only be merely a form of politeness—the kind of thing you have to say if you want hosts of friends. But you, yourself, know that you have been watching the clock go round ever since they came. You feel exhausted from boredom. How you long to get away. Worn out with "people," you throw yourself on your bed. Hardly have you been trying to find yourself for ten minutes when in walks your wife, or, if you be a woman, your husband. So you have to begin again. With weary brain you describe how rude the fish man was to you that morning. You say everything about him that you can think of, and a great deal that you merely recollect at the moment. You simply have to talk, because if he—or she—returned home and found "darling" in a room locked up by "itself" there would be all the fuss of wondering if "it" were ill, or going off "its" head. No wonder, then, I advise all those who desire to keep the flames of love burning, to go away by themselves from time to time, not to flirt—as will, of course, be popularly supposed—but just to fill once more that well of individual thought which, after all, is the secret of charm and originality. If you always have to give of yourself, and, even when you are wearied, still go on giving, the result is a series of conversational strings which become painfully worn and "thin" at last. For sooner or later there comes to everyone the years when they can no longer live the life of the crowd, when they must of necessity find their happiness alone, and in themselves. There is nothing sadder than the sight of an old woman or man with no interests, no resources, nothing; simply an unquenchable longing for somebody or other to come in to amuse them. If they cannot offer expectations to an unmarried niece, the loneliness of their lot is pitiable. Usually, they have

to fall back upon the faded trio who, in return for a good dinner, don't object to play bridge with a host or hostess who is too old to remember for more than two minutes tgether if they went spades or no trumps. But that is a miserable final to a life of unceasing sociability and hospitality to all and every, the more the merrier, the oftener the more jolly. Those who have parted with their dreams have parted with all that makes for affection and friendship and love in life. The crowd to whom they have given their years and their " soul " offer them nothing in the long years —*con tempo adagio*—which, sooner or later, overtake the most successful life. The loneliness of old age appals them. They have fled from solitude as from an avenging conscience. Solitude has nothing to offer them now but boredom.

Our Retreat.

We all need need to retreat from time to time—to seek a little quiet sanctuary far from the turmoil of life, the cackle of the crowd, the agitating society of men, the enervating society of too many women. Just some little quiet place where all the world is sexless, and where the troubles of to-day and the fears of to-morrow do not cast their impenetrable gloom. A silent nook where we can lie dreaming out of sight of the critical; an earthly Nirvana where the passions are at rest. Such places are necessary to every man if he does not wish to rot of too much animation. For the majority of people live far too much and far too often in full glare of the world. Their minds have become mere husks through too generously giving out, and too seldom taking in. They have lost themselves through being too seldom by themselves. They are too often on view. No man or woman is really his or her true self unless they are alone or—and this is rare in a world where most things have become a pretence—with those

whom their every thought and action, even their silences, are respected and understood.

Solitude.

I am a great believer in solitude. We are not half lonely enough. Unfortunately, you've simply got to fight if you desire to obtain it. The world hates to see anybody alone. It longs to rush in and, metaphorically speaking, tell of the delinquencies of its "plain cook." If we had not our own bedrooms, where would most of us go to escape? Fancy, if we all slept in dormitories, or, worse still, if there were no such thing as sleep! Alas! matrimony as it is conventionally constituted does not allow its votaries even this luxury. Half the troubles of married people come through neither party being able to get away from the other. Poor things, they have nowhere to go. They begin to get at last on each other's nerves. Half those big tragedies which spring so often from such small beginnings might be averted if the husband or wife possessed each of them their own little sanctuary where they could retire to "think things out." A sanctuary is necessary for everybody. We all need to stop and consider in silence from time to time. The person who is never alone is the dullest company in the whole world. All that there ever was in him has long since been given out. He lives for ever afterwards like an octopus, sucking the ideas of others in the vain hope of filling up his void. To be amused he will go to any lengths; to hide his inner poverty he will babble on long, long after he has come to the end of everything he had to say. He is frankly a bore, and in his old age, he usually turns "nasty."

On Being by Yourself.

THERE comes to us in our lives moments when we long to get away from everything and everybody we know;

away from the turmoil of the trivial—which is every-day life; away, far, far away from those people—and how numerous they are—who, in their calmer moods, talk eternally of grandchildren and cooks; who, in their more agitated moments, apply the verb "ought" with a sledge-hammer, to other people. Amidst the chatter-patter of our neighbours' tongues, babbling of their own pet nothings, we conjure up mental pictures of lonely mountain peaks—wild, beautiful, lonely; or perhaps of quiet gardens, scented and shady, where we can dream for awhile of the might-have-been-had-our wish-long-ago-come-true. Day dreams are our only refuge. They offer us a means of escape; they proffer us a sanctuary wherein we may hide from the callous hordes of the world. We cling to them as we cling to our belief in a promised land. They accord us respite; they give us rest. But the crowd frightens away our dreams. So we yearn to flee away—far away—and, in loneliness and silence, find the Real Self which, in that struggle for the propitiation of bores—that is, social life—we sometimes seem to lose.

Our Masks.

It was Emerson, I think, who once said that we are never our true selves except when we are quite alone. The moment we find ourselves in the company of other people, we instinctively assume a mask. And this of necessity. For with others, we are always either on the defensive or offensive, or merely bored, or valiantly trying to please. Never are we completely natural—never. Our mask may be a more beautiful one than the mood which lies behind it; or it may be more unkindly than the thoughts we feel. In any case, we are never quite ourselves. A mask is always a mask, consequently something which we hold in front of our faces. And, oh, the tedium of always having to keep it up. Hence our longing to flee occasionally from

everybody we know; hence, also that more aggressive stage of our desired hermitage—the longing to put everybody we know to flight. If we are always "giving out"—as we must of necessity be doing when we are in the company of other people, to a greater or less degree as we feel for them an affinity—we must eventually become "empty." And that feeling of emptiness makes us foolish, often strident, and eventually brings boredom even to those we love. Moreover, there is no chance for us to fill our minds once more until we get alone by ourselves to think things out. In solitude thoughts come of their own accord. In dreams, we sometimes stumble across realities. That is the reason why people who are always with other people, and are never happy except when they are with them, are invariably so unutterably dull. Some, indeed, become so hopelessly dependent on the society of others that they consider themselves as tragic examples of human loneliness if someone does not share the same bedroom; and this, regardless of the knowledge that a too great propinquity, though it may breed love, will as surely kill it. It stands to reason that if you are always talking you can never be thinking, and, when you never think, your conversation becomes, sooner or later, sheer twaddle.

Social Twaddle.

How often you hear the cry, "Oh, I'm so glad you have taken pity on me. I was *feeling so depressed and lonely*! Do you know, *I haven't had anybody to talk to all day*!" It is usually followed by anecdotes concerning the genius of grandchildren; or what Aunt Emily said in her last letter; or the latest villainy perpetrated by the cook; or exactly why she bought her new hat with the bright green feather, and what she intends doing with the last year's blue one; or what a "sight" Mrs. Smith looked in church last Sunday;

or what he said to her the other morning, and what she answered back—pat. An everlasting harping on the personal note is a sure and certain sign that no fresh air has passed through the mind for years. A man or woman who is never alone develops a brain at last which is like nothing so much as a gramophone with a limited number of over-worn records. Strangers may possibly find these people delightful—for a time. It is noticeable, however, that they seldom possess any old friends—except a few "letter" ones at a conveniently long distance. Very, very small talk may possibly make an entertaining letter; often, too, it passes a few afternoons quite agreeably; but it is fatal to real friendship, and it inspires no esteem.

The Difficulty of Being Alone.

Yes; have you ever noticed how difficult it is in life to be alone? Always have you to fight and still fight on for an acknowledgement of these hours of voluntary solitude which you seek, and which, after long periods of "giving out," are assuredly your due. People seem to dislike to see anybody enjoying themselves, *by* themselves. They call it being unsociable; but they mean that you are selfish. Secretly, in their heart of hearts, they believe that because you are alone, you must be feeling either depressed or dull. They imagine that your mood would immediately take upon itself a more roseate hue were they to intrude upon your solitude to prophecy to you concerning the weather. The more they love you the longer they will prophecy. They demand of you a confirmation of the idea that it will necessarily be fine in the afternoon because it rained before seven in the morning. They ask you innumerable questions; they inform you of things you did not want to know. They go on for hours, and they leave you under the impression that they found you on the verge of suicide, and straightway "cheered you

up." But you, yourself, discarding the mask of pleasure you perforce had assumed while they were with you, thank Heaven upon your knees that they are gone. Only listeners are bored. People who are always talking are always pleased with themselves. And the people who never sought the mental clarification of solitude are never silent. Their conversation becomes quite mechanical at last. These people always profess to love their fellow-creatures, and pride themselves upon having "hosts of friends." Life for them is scarcely to be considered worth living if fate forces them to spend a few days absolutely by themselves. They have no resources. Their dreams fled when they put up their hair. They exist from hour to hour in the hopeful expectancy of running across someone to whom to relate the trivialities of their day.

Boredom Behind a Smile.

No wonder these people—and how numerous they are! —do not understand how solitude can be needful for the broadening of one's mental outlook, for the development of one's soul. Not understanding the fact that, unless we are with the right kind of people, the utmost solitude is preferable, they rush towards us with arms outstretched. For them, everybody who can listen is the right kind of person. You yourself are merely an adjunct to their own joy. Were you not at hand to sympathise with them over the latest sign of incompetency in the kitchen, someone else would be; and who their confidant may be matters very little to people with "hosts of friends." If, perchance, they seem to prefer you to your neighbour, it is because you have a sympathetic way of agreeing with them in all things, and hiding your feelings of insufferable boredom behind a smile. "I don't know when I have enjoyed a chat more," they cry to you after two hours' monologue about themselves. They cannot imagine

that you have not enjoyed yourself, too, or that in this expression of pleasure you have not found all you may seek for in the way of reward. "Now you *must* come and have tea with me to-morrow," they insist, as they take their leave. And how smilingly, yet how firmly, we decline. How gratefully we close the door behind them. We have had more than enough of gramophone records for one week.

An Escape towards Solitude.

Shepherds, you will find, are never dull. They have time to watch, to observe, and to *think*. They may not be able to tell you the truth—as they feel it—about many things, but truth in a few facts is infinitely preferable to an "echo" of all things. Moreover, they are restful. They understand the need and necessity of sometimes being quiet. The clamouring of the crowd does not reach them. The thoughts which come to them are *real* thoughts, individual thoughts—the only thoughts worth thinking—most certainly the only ones worth listening to. And every one of us should live the life of a shepherd for a short time each day; we should claim this privilege as a right. In most homes there is no sanctuary, except one's own bedroom, and not even there if one must share it with another. This is, I am convinced, the reason why most homes are a suppressed yell.

The Result.

When we cannot get away from everybody, sooner or later everybody is "on our nerves." We talk for the sake of talking, and we say nothing worth hearing. We dread to go away by ourselves, lest those who love us should imagine we are mad. We cannot lock ourselves away for a few hours for fear lest every member of the household should feel it incumbent upon

them to ask us through the door if they can "do anything for us." So love often dies, killed by sheer monotony and dulness. Husbands and wives cease to talk because they have nothing new to say. He has heard all her ideas long ago; she could recite by heart his opinions of Heaven, Hell, and the Universe. They love each other still—yet are bored unutterably. All they had to say has been said and repeated by them long ago—yet they are not resigned to silence. The strain of appearing "bright" makes them strident. They begin at last to hate each other. They are the victims of awful propinquity. They suffer, not from love grown cold, but from the inability to get away by themselves. Resigning themselves to the inevitable, they grow old and stale and indifferent together.

Too Much Society.

And if too close a propinquity kills love, so does it shatter every tender relationship in life. A certain amount of solitude is necessary to everyone. And by "solitude" I do not necessarily mean loneliness, but liberty, freedom, the power to get away by oneself, to do exactly what one wants to do, and to do it alone. The inner life we all lead is more necessary to our happiness than the outer which we live *vis-a-vis* to world. Its success or failure means less to our acquaintances perhaps, but infinitely more to us. For with barrenness within, an outward husk of splendour resembles nothing so greatly as the silver "furniture" of a coffin.

The Everyday.

The battle of the Everyday is the most difficult battle of life. We can rescue from drowning, lead a forlorn hope, defend our country from the enemy, while our

home circle is a barren wilderness for want of a little sympathy, a little generosity and love, a little eagerness to give as well as to take. It is a sad kink in human nature which makes the majority of us most ungrateful the more people who love us sacrifice ourselves in our interest. It ought to be otherwise. Unselfishness, while the most divine of all the virtues, can prove the ruination of the whole household. It often breeds not gratitude, but brutes. There is a happy medium, even in the Christ-like attributes. We imagine that because we are full grown, and do our hair up or grow whiskers, we cannot be spoilt. The Everyday gives the lie to this, alas! It is yet another illustration of the doormat and the boot. If there were no doormats we should not be nearly so ready to wipe our feet, and the doormat has to be whisked away by some over-zealous housemaid or burnt beyond repair by some corrosive fluid before we acknowledge, even to ourselves, its very useful purpose. And as the worst enemies of children are over-indulgent parents, so the worst enemy of a woman is an over-indulgent husband, and *vice versa*, and the worst enemy of a nation is too much peace and prosperity. The lesson of the Everyday is the lesson of the hedgerow—it has to be continually clipped before it reaches its full strength and perfection.

Little Things.

Yet, it is a curious fact to realise, the most difficult things to live through are not the big, splendid moments, but the nasty, irritating, niggly little ones. These destroy the happiness of our lives. Men can dash into the water and rescue another man from drowning who won't even try to bring a ray of unexpected happiness to their own wives. They will wax eloquent over her virtue, her unselfishness, her divine understanding, yet hesitate not a single instant before

they hurt her love to the quick by making eyes at other women. In the same way, there are wives who declare themselves ready to go through fire and water for their husbands, and profess it while sitting upon a hat bill which they know to be much greater than their husbands can afford to pay. And so it is all through life. We are ready for the big sacrifices while allowing the little ones to pass undone. Yet, it is the little neglects which kill the big devotions. And it seems to me that the great act of heroism, when it comes along, if ever it does, which is rarely!—will be but an outcome of all these little victories. It is a piece of luck when you find a jewel in a rubbish heap.

Life.

What a sad story it would make were we all to keep a diary, on one side of which we wrote what we intended doing, and upon the other what we actually did. Most of us set forth when we are young with the enthusiasm to remove mountains. Alas! as we look back on our lives, we realise only too clearly that the most we ever did was to kick over a molehill. It is all heartrendingly disappointing. There seems to be something in Destiny—or does it lie within our own natures?—which comes between us and all our glorious aims, leaving us nothing but a heap of unfulfilled ambitions at the end. So few of us can go straight ahead along the pathway which we feel our lives ought to lead; we are always being turned from our intentions by other people, or by love, or by pity, or by hatred, or by loss of money or health. Thus, most of us become mere thistledown, blown hither and thither in the wind, to settle at last on a desolate sand dune. And we feel that we ought to have been such rockets! Each one of us feels he ought to have been a rocket. So

often disappointment makes us bitter, or hard, or merely callous. Our bad intentions go as a rule unpunished; just as our good ones usually go without reward. This lack of Justice in life is one of life's greatest mysteries. It even puzzles those who believe in God. We are always finding excuses or reasons for acts of Providence which, to our own inner conscience, are the reverse of what is Just and Right. But Providence is never shamed. It still goes on gaily, allowing the square peg to die in the round hole, the innocent to suffer for the guilty, the good for the bad, the weak for the strong, those of good intentions for those who never had any at all.

The End.

I SUPPOSE the uselessness of all effort creeps like paralysis over every heart at some time or another. Our lives, our ideals, our work, our love, and hope and despair—all seem so vital, so vastly important in the scheme of things, until—suddenly—one day there flashes through one's mind the thought that everything is no use, all effort, all suffering, all struggle objectless, and that the end of everything is nothingness, and beauty and happiness a dream.

Real Life and the False.

THE most difficult thing in life is to keep in view its big essentials amid the mass of pretences which make up our civilised every-day. Most of us live our lives without having once known what living really is. We have been surrounded so long by the things which mean nothing that many of us become at last merely prisoners in starched collars. Bound in the confines of what we term our "set," chained hand and foot by convention we are too stupid to consider, we twaddle away our days. We know that it is not the proper

thing to eat peas with a knife, that a hard crease down the leg of each trouser is "smart," that black and white socks are worn, that to appreciate caviar is to write oneself down a "gentleman," that it is considered rather "good form" to drop the final "g" when speaking but to let fall an essential "h" is certainly not "the thing." We know all these matters and, metaphorically speaking, they have become the *modus vivendi* of our lives. In the civilised world only two classes of people ever really live—the rich who "don't care," the poor who "don't matter." We others are afraid. We twaddle.

Life.

Yet beyond the bricks and mortar of the city, beyond the manufactured chit-chat of the dinner table, the uninspired arguments of politics, the ceaseless pursuit after women, society and "the thing," there lies the big wide world with its drama, its excitement, its vast distances, its wild music, its silence, its laughter, and its tears. To find it, however, you must renounce all those blind alleys of existence. You've got to forget appearances and the judgment of those who live next door; you've got to cast off the Tomkynses, the Joneses, and the De Veres, the prejudices of class, religion, and pure Bayswater, and set out with the knowledge that right is right, that the world is deep and wide, that each man is as good as another until he has proved himself inferior, and that life is fleeting, and there is so much to see and do. To stand on the hilltops with arms outstretched, God's sky above him, God's love and strength of purpose in his heart, makes a man nearer to Heaven than sitting on the latest edition of the evening paper in his club in Piccadilly thinking of another man's wife.

Town Life.

Sometimes, as I stand crushed and rather stifled in the lifts of the city tube stations, I am astonished at the number of " dead " men and women who surround me. They are not ugly, their expression is not bad; it is simply unemotional—flat. Their faces simply say Clapham-Bank, Bank-Clapham, every day of their lives. Their tragedy, too, is not that they are suffocated but simply that they are commonplace and content. I wonder whether they have ever felt the call of the wilds, been goaded to flight by the coming of spring, ever loved not wisely but too well, been damned and risen again from Hell's mount of ashes.

The Middle-aged Ostrich.

What a lot of people there are who absolutely refuse to meet life face to face—people who do not want to *understand* but only desire to judge; people who believe in *absolute right* and *absolute wrong*, and themselves know the difference to a milligram; people who divide every-day facts into " not nice " and " nice," men and women into " ladies " and " gentlemen," emotions into " decorous " and " wanton "; people who shiver at a dropped "h," condemn a man for a dirty collar, look upon all women as wicked who " fall," and live in a kind of weak-tea-party world, wherein surges an endless turmoil over the things which do not in the least matter. For such people is the great mass of milk-and-water fiction, the platitudes, the conventions, and squirrel-skin toques and jackets. They are like a great human wad against which new ideas, reforms, the " big " things of life hurl themselves unavailingly. And for the most part they live in the country. The things which are going on all over the world are unheard of by them. They do not care; the meaning of life has escaped them. They become atrophied in

their teens. When they are brought face to face with something uncomfortable they profess not to see it or declare that it isn't true, or, if it be so, then they don't want to hear anything about it as it isn't "nice." Men and women of this kind are "hopeless," and they add to their neighbourhood the drab atmosphere of boredom which exasperates the wicked until they rejoice in their wickedness. But at any rate they are comparatively harmless. The same cannot be said of those people who, being just as ignorant of human nature and life, yet set out to force the reformation of both. These people pin their moral faith on Acts of Parliament, clergymen, and "the thing"—just those things which are out of touch with life. They usually breed bored husbands, restless children, and that misunderstanding between class and class which is the one big finger of condemnation pointed at modern civilisation to-day.

The Far-away Long-ago.

I OFTEN wonder what are really the regrets of people who are condemned to death. Properly speaking, they are supposed to repent their sins. But I'm sure they don't. More likely they weep for the joys they passed by from some cause or another. I'm perfectly certain that the thought which oppresses most people when they come to die is, not the wicked acts they have committed, but the time they wasted over people whose opinion and society wasn't worth a second's consideration. I can imagine that, after having fully and completely lived one's own life, death comes as a glorious climax. Annihilation to come when one has never really lived at all—that must indeed be tragedy. And yet that is how death finds most of us, even though we live to be eighty. It is not that we *can't* live so much as that the majority of us *daren't* live. I speak, alas! from experience. The years are passing, and behind

me stretches an existence as noisy as a bear-garden, as joyless as a seaside promenade beneath a lowering sky, and very nearly as useless as if it had never been. Could I put back the clock twenty years. . . . Oh, but so many people are saying that! The thing is to face the present moment and to get as much pleasure out of it as one can. That is the only way to live life. Most of us are denying ourselves in every way for a future which usually never comes. It is not altogether our fault. When we are young we are influenced by other people, by society, by the "shams" which go to make up the conduct of the world. By the time we have discovered that our elders were all wrong, that society demands much and offers no real pleasure, and that the world is government by "authorities," than whom greater tyrants and more callous were never rulers in Hell, we are too old to strike out an existence of our own. We just fret and make the best of it. But what a condemnation of ourselves it is to own that we have only one life that we really know of, and we live it trying to make the best of it. The world is so full of joy and happiness and goodness if we are only courageous enough to look for them. But so few of us are brave. We are, nearly all of us, governed by somebody or something, and none of them rule over us either with sympathy or with love. Duty is an ideal we preach to other people.

The World.

And over the quiet fireside, or alone with nature, silent and our true selves, we dream of the life which might have been had we been brave. Now the darkness is gathering, and time is getting short, and all most of us have learnt from life we have learnt too late; and the only truth we feel to be real at the bottom of our hearts is that most things which the world told us

mattered—don't in the very least, and all those which really do matter, people ignore or deny. So we have missed half the joys of life and got in exchange the world's condescension, which is really more like the approval of one canting hypocrite to another than any crown of laurels. No wonder, then, the people who have lived in the wilder parts of the world feel suffocated when they return to this wilderness of war, poverty, and disease which we proudly call civilisation. What is civilisation worth to any of us if it does not make for happiness? Men put their thumbs in their armpits and proudly talk about progress, as if being rushed in a few hours from London to Edinburgh were a sign of grace. They point to science, but except in medical science I fail to see how mankind has benefited by it, while the misery it has inflicted in mind, as well as in body, very nearly outweighs its advantages. They point to material progress, and I see the slums. They point to beauty, and I see that it is only possible to the rich. They declare that all this means enlightenment and human happiness, and I see the millions of sad, spiritless faces everywhere around me. And then I hear of the immediate corruption and deterioration of character and morals which takes place in the simple natives whenever the white man sets his foot among them, and I wonder whether, after all, it would not be better for us to go on our knees to the ignorant heathen praying to his idols and declare that he is nearer the secret of living than are we. For him God is an ever-present reality. For him life is a thing of contemplation, love, and sensual beauty. We have lost our hold on all these things, and our knowledge has given us no happiness in return. It is better to be a happy child than a full-grown man desolate in his greater knowledge.

Virtue.

I THINK that one may take it for an axiom that the more people profess a virtue the less they have of it. "There's one thing about *me—I'm no snob*," declares the new baronet's wife as she talks to the local charwoman at the sewing party, and hopes that everybody will notice how natural and affable she is. "I have never known what love is before I met you. I shall love you for ever and ever," cries the man who has been divorced twice and been unfaithful to every woman he has professed to worship throughout his whole life. "I consider that every able-bodied young man should give up his life to his country," says the fat stockbroker as he lolls back in his Rolls-Royce or Daimler car and suddenly ceases from grumbling viciously at his increased income tax. "I have not a scrap of vanity about me," declares the fair-haired woman who started life as a brunette. "A woman who will tell a deliberate lie will do anything," says the clergyman's wife as she enthusiastically pretends to welcome the wealthy patroness of her husband's living whom she positively dislikes. "Those horrible women ought to be swept off the streets," says the young married lady as she presents to her pet "boy" a gold cigarette case which she has bought with her husband's money. And so on and so on.

Salvation.

I AM always extremely suspicious of a tremendous protestation of virtue. It is like hysterical grief at a funeral. Somehow or other the possession of a quality makes it almost impossible to talk of it, whereas one we admire and are rather weak in makes us extremely voluble and assertive about it. Those who make a profession of their goodness are tremendously anxious over the goodness of other people. The salvation of other people is the frantic object of more than

half the world. I don't mean necessarily the spiritual salvation. People are so busy trying to make other people better in every way. Everybody knows everybody's else's duty. No one seems seriously to sit down to criticise their own. As for the professional philanthropist, I have the greatest suspicion of his powers of good. It is comparatively easy to rescue, and so difficult, and far more troublesome, to prevent. Charity and kindness are usually done by stealth—at least, the best kind are. The moment I hear of the Virtuous setting forth to put the world to rights with a great deal of fussiness and a tremendous flourish of trumpets, I am always inclined to inquire into the morality of their own homes. For, after all, it is in one's own home that charity should first begin. I don't, of course, mean necessarily in one's own family circle, but among all the people, great and small, with whom one daily comes in contact. Above all, save me from the preacher. It is so easy to preach, so difficult to perform. Besides, I don't know how anybody *dare* do it. There are a hundred ways to salvation, and whereas we may perhaps be a little finer in some way that our companion, we are most certainly inferior to him in others. It seems to me that if you strive to improve yourself you eventually improve other people far more than if you had turned your virtuous attention exclusively to their moral welfare in the first instance.

Nobody likes to be saved. It usually means a plain individual with a bad complexion and and uplifted forefinger. England is full of busybodies, busy after the interior welfare of other people. I suppose it is because they are bored with their own. I never have been able to understand why a man who believes in vegetarianism or teetotalism or the Higher Thought or Woman's Suffrage or Atheism cannot believe in silence. Why

must he always make such a row over his Faith? Worse, why must he always try to force—by Act of Parliament if possible—his own particular view upon everybody else? The people who believe that they have found the Truth cause, I am sure, more discomfort and misery than all the men and women who ever walked in ignorance and blindness. Everyone has a right to go to the dogs or to remain in darkness if he wishes to. Certainly no good is ever done by entering a man's house to tell him what a blackguard he is.

The Quiet Good.

The number of people who have banged other people's heads because they are not as they are is incalculable. Yet this still remains a "wicked world." Something must be wrong somewhere. Either mankind can't be made better or else those who set out to effect his reformation are doing it in the wrong way. What they all lack is any sense of brotherly love—except in theory. I am convinced that the people who really do the most good in this world are the quiet, all-loving, all-charitable people of whom the world never hears. Everybody has known one or two of these in their lives, and they will all acknowledge that they have made the world far more beautiful, consequently far more conducive to being good in, than all the busybodies who have "views" on this and that and the other and can do everything except stop at home to live up to them. We have little pity for the fallen, still less understanding. We do not realise that the morally depraved may attain far greater heights in their efforts to rise above themselves than those who, having a few weaknesses and consequently fewer temptations, never rise at all; that misery and misfortune and unhappiness have within themselves more God-like attributes than Sanctity and Moral Certainty; that

pity and repentance are far nearer Virtue than pride and moral boastfulness; that God is to be found more often outside the Church than in it, and that the Spark of Divinity burns brighter sometimes in the heart of the outcast than in the heart of the man who considers himself sufficient enlightened to go out to "save."

The Wrong Kind of Virtue.

I AM not quite sure that rampant wickedness is not less harmful to the world at large than absolute virtue intoxicated by its own glory. To live blissfully certain of being able to divide the sheep from the goats on sight, to pass through life knowing exactly the difference between right and wrong in every conceivable circumstance, may perhaps please the seekers after righteousness in Timbuctoo when they read about it, but is a fearsome blight upon the peace of the immediate neighbourhood. For the longer I live it appears to me that goodness is no definite thing at all, but just a sympathy and understanding and help to all those who are in trouble, no matter how black has been their record. But righteousness, as the world understands it, often covers such an appalling vengeance, and the good seem often too willing to ramp over the world with scourges. It is not sufficient to *know;* one must persecute the as yet inconverted in the name of that knowledge. Thus Truth becomes so often another word for tyranny, and love for one's brethren is preached by means of the pistol held at one's brother's head.

Always Right.

YET there is no doubt that those who wield the lash of rightcousness quickly collect to themselves a whole army of those who also pass through life with, as it were, a scorpion ready in their hands. From a world-

history point of view they probably do some good, but I always feel sorry for those members of their family who have to live with them. A prophet in the market-place may perhaps be impressive, but imagine the same prophet at the daily breakfast table. How awful! There ought to be a garden village for all those who are violently attacked by an 'ism, and the members of their immediate family ought to be able to export them thither at the expense of the propaganda which has so upset their mentality. Within their garden village these people might be allowed by law to put their theories to the test and live that absolute truth which was only discovered by the leader of their faith the day before yesterday. I can imagine no more distressful destiny than having to live under the same roof, day in, day out, with someone who absolutely and violently *knows*. In fact, as I remarked before, people who have just discovered a new religion, or cured themselves by a new diet, or burn to be allowed to vote, or who in any way suffer from another's grievance, should have a town reserved for them so that they and their disciples could live out their theories until either they succumbed to too much absolute knowledge or else were killed by those who were equally certain that any solution to life's problems but their own was entirely and wickedly wrong, and consequently must be "done to death."

Abuse.

People love to be abused so long as they are abused *en masse*. If you pick them out individually and call them "rotters" there is likely to be trouble popping its angry head above the horizon. And the reason of this is very simple. If you are abused *en masse* it is always *the others* to whom the abuse applies. I can well remember, in the fox-trotting times of peace, how

a fashionable West End church was crowded Sunday after Sunday, or whenever a famous Roman Catholic preacher ascended the pulpit to tell the congregation how wicked it was. The congregation loved it. It was *so* true, and *so* necessary. And the moral applied to nearly all their friends. It was dreadful, everyone who hated cards and adored dancing asserted, that grown-up men and women should spend all the leisure of their lives going " no trumps " and discarding from " weakness " or " strength." It really was a disgrace that in the year 1914, as the bridge maniacs declared, young people should go through a kind of vulgar hugging to music at afternoon teas, in the evening, all night. The war was simply bound to come, cried the golf maniacs, regarding the slouch-hat-long-hair-dirty-skin-silly-posings of the Café Royal-cum-Chelsea brigade. So they all abused each other and loved to hear each other abused. And it was all very proper, and very necessary, and very purifying. When the war did break out, the golf maniacs regarded the dance maniacs, the Futurists gazed at the Philistines, feeling quite confident that the other had made the war a necessity. Everything and everybody was all excitement. People sat at home and read the war news, and it seemed to them that they and all their class were being purified. It was a highly elevating feeling and made them feel quite historic.

Those Others.

For the first year lots of people declared that they would not have died in the year 1913 for anything. The war made them all feel as though they lived in a history book. How full of war work their daily lives became! Nobody else seemed to be doing anything at all! " It was about time that English people were made to realise the war and what the war means."

strenuous ladies declared, joining a club to knit mufflers for the soldiers on two afternoons per week—if they hadn't a headache. "Wake up, England," was on everybody's lips, because everybody seemed to be asleep except those yelling the war cry. How we rushed into various occupations, became tired of them, and rushed into others! How certain we were that nobody realised the war except ourselves! How frantic, and often angry, we were lest anyone should do anything "as usual"! What white feathers we distributed! How country people wanted to close theatres, and town women yearned to turn every country girl on to the land! How many plain women got up on platforms to tell the world that they had had no new dress since the war began! How many pretty ones retaliated with the argument that, on account of their life's new strenuousness, the wide skirt was indispensable to the rolling of bandages! People seemed indeed to run out and buy things, not because they needed them but because it was helping to keep somebody's roof over their heads. So people bought more than ever.

Economy.

Now they are out economising, and mount platforms, dressed in expensive furs and jewellery, to tell the world what it must learn to go without. The married men think that every single man should be killed before the least of them is even "called out." The single men point to the married men with rich wives, the married couples with no children, the married men with wives capable of earning their own and their children's living—and ask, and ask again, "Why"? Everybody is dissatisfied with everybody else. And this for the simple reason that everybody else is all wrong, from the Government downwards. Everybody's business belongs to somebody else. Everybody

is suspicious of everybody else. And the man who gets up and calls everybody rude names is certain of great applause. The epidemic of the Mote-and-the-Beam is rampant in the land. Everyone is suffering from it. We alone are immune, since we alone are doing our duty; or, if we aren't, then we have arrived at the time of life when such things are best left to the young, capable, and all other people.

Age.

I SUPPOSE I must be growing old. I don't mean that I am becoming garrulous, or decrepit, or making every chair upon which I sit a Seat of Judgment, looking at everybody around as if they were merely a herd of miserable and mistaken, certainly very noisy, sinners; I mean that I am beginning to realise that nothing in this life matters except work and contemplation, the society of a few friends, and love—and love is no high-falutin spiritual sense either. I have few illusions, yet still retain a great faith and an even greater hope. I have always, deep down in my heart, realised the essentials of happiness, although—like most other people—I lost sight of them under a morass of tedious things which Other People told me were made for our pleasure. Perhaps I am getting grumpy, and yet, in my inmost being, I have rarely felt more serene. The war has revealed the Truth amid all our life of Shams. Moreover, it allows us to live it—live it more completely than we have ever done before. It has swept from the Everyday nearly everything which made the Everyday so unutterably futile. We no longer rush after people who are rushing away from us; we have ceased to pretend to an intellectualism or a verbal smartness which deceived nobody but ourselves; we do not nowadays lose all the precious moments of consciousness in the "entertainment" of dull people at inordinately dull entertainments; we

have grown to care for nothing but the fact that life has a splendid Ideal, and that in work and self-sacrifice and unselfishness lies the only real secret of human peace—I will not say happiness. The object of our life to-day is not so much to make money as to make other people happier.

The New Earth.

In living all that is best and greatest in ourselves we alone can claim a place in that glorious army of men and women who are laying down their lives for us far away. If we cannot fight, we must make ourselves worthy to be fought for. That is our duty. Thus alone will the New Earth be created after the war. And without this promise of a New Earth—the sacrifice of a single life were utterly useless. To preserve the old state of things, to find the world years hence as selfish and paltry and cruel as it was yesterday—would not merit the strangulation of a mongrel cat. Unless we can live in the peaceful future up to the high human Ideal which war has shown us to be real and true, it would be better if " civilisation "—as we were once proud to call it—passed away into the limbo of the world's hopeless failures. " Things will never be the same again ! " people murmur regretfully. They never will. It is for this that brave men and women go out to die. They never will be the same again—and that is a vow as well as a prayer.

The Chatty Common-place.

And if there has ever been a time when books have appealed to me it has been since the war began. After all, it is only in books that one may find the Essentials of Life treated with due regard to their importance. In books, authors have said what they would have liked to have said in everyday life—and either daren't or thought it not worth while. That is their relief as

well as their delight. People are always so busy saying things they don't mean, or rushing about after objects of which they have never once stopped to consider their true worth, that they never have time to tell the truth as they feel it or discuss the things that really and truly matter. So in this time of awful suspense, the tittle-tattle of Everyday jars even more then ever. There is less patience with " bromides " and the bromide point of view. Silence is better than the dull reiteration of wonder why God doesn't stop the war. Loneliness is preferable to arguments round and around the War Office by people who know the true state of affairs as little as we do ourselves. Bridge, racing, the dull " patter " of tea-party small-talk—they seem to-day like empty laughter at a funeral. The awfulness of their futility jars unutterably. So we escape from them into the world of those books we love. There, at least, we may find respite from the talkative commonplace—and the commonplace is always extremely chatty, isn't it?

The Work of Playing.

THERE, at least, lies a chance of being able to get away from bores. Beyond books, there remains only work—hard work, engrossing work; work and the untiring effort to do some little good while we may. I do not envy the people who nowadays spasmodically knit-mittens the long, long while between struggling to get their golf handicap down from twenty-four to twelve. I rather fancy this type will find themselves as " out of it " in the New Earth to be born after the War as they do to-day when the conventions and systems which bolstered them up are fast crumbling away into dust. I believe that the future will have small use for the individual—whether he be man or woman—whose only labour in life is a ceaseless struggle to be able to *play*.

Our Past.

Our Past is our own affair—*absolutely*. The wise man (or woman) keeps it entirely to himself—unless, perchance, he can make a more or less honest penny by revealing it to the world. Beware, however, always and always of that " dear friend " who yearns to forage in our secrets. Those we love have, perhaps, the least right to know them since it is with those whom we love that we wish to live as the man or woman we have *become* and not as the man or woman we may once have been. A yearning to know the past of anyone is never at its best anything but an idle, or morbid, or impertinent curiosity. Suffice that we are what we are, and hope eventually to be what we have always yearned to become. It is not fair to the present or the future to handicap their development with the remembrance of past mistakes. After all, the world is divided into those who were and those who were not found out. If we all had our rights, if all of us were judged by the same standard as we judge other people, half of us would nowadays be languishing in jail. So let us take ourselves as we wish to be taken, and take others as we wish they would take us. The mistakes we have made, the evil we have thought and done, the foolishness of yesterday, count towards the present and future as naught. Rather it seems to me that, if we are *really and truly* sorry and ashamed, they ought to be counted unto us as glory. It is a happy fact in the human soul that if you never fall you can never rise; and you have learnt no lesson from life if, all the time, you have lived upon one monotonous dead level. Lack of opportunity or inclination alone separates most of the " virtuous " from the "wicked." It is, metaphorically speaking, very easy to have " no patience with drink " if the least drop of alcohol makes you bilious. No one will ever reform anybody by admonitions. The only way to make a person bet-

ter is to appeal to the best in him, pitying him in his failures to live always up to it. The road to Hell, we are told, is paved with Good Intentions. Well, I sometimes think that God only counts these paving stones, never their eventual goal.

All the same, the world much prefers Pasts to Presents. If a person once sat down and wrote a book concerning what they are and what they hope to become, not a soul would read it. For one thing, it would usually be a book of Good Intentions, and no one cares a jot about Good Intentions, anyway. They like to read about all the naughty things you've done, not the splendid deeds you hope to do—though these would make much more moral reading. In this way, there has sprung up during the last few years quite a library of "Pasts." Great ladies who would dismiss their own cooks *daring* to have a baby in the kitchen cupboard, fell to and whitewashed their own "falls" until it seemed that all the real saints of society had been once at least through the Divorce Court. Nobody believed them, but there is always a sneaking sympathy for the less fortunate in the hearts of those who have not been found out.

The Research Magnificent, but Futile.

It is a strange and sad fact that those who strive to make the world better usually die alone. The man possessed of an Idea—and that Idea concerning the purification of the Social System—finds in every man and woman an almost unsurmountable stumbling block. Often he fails or loses heart at the first attempt. He cannot face that life of loneliness which Fate deals out to those not content to be merely echoes. The man who would add to the universal happiness of humanity is up against every man, and every man is up against him. Unless he be ruthless, without heart, almost without conscience, the world swamps him and his

revolutionary notions, laughing to see him drown. Thus, so many young people set out in life waving a firebrand, only to end up later on as churchwardens in squeaking boots and white waistcoats.

Pleasing Poultices.

You see, the only powerful people are the people "on top," and they are "on top" because things are what they are. Those underneath don't matter. They are allowed to vote, but their voting merely leaves them exactly where they were, plus the illusion that the country is governed "by the people." It is all quite simple. You give things other names—everybody talks about a New Heaven and a New Earth—and the world goes on exactly as it went on before. Still, the present human misery allows a number of well-meaning people to administer justice at the wrong end. Infirmaries, soup kitchens, district visiting, reformatories, shelters, fresh-air funds, workhouses, the poor laws, boards of guardians, charity bazaars, missionary meetings, and old-age pensions are all admirable means whereby kind-hearted people find an honest chance of being kind in their own way. The world simply loves soup kitchens and shelters and rescue homes and things like that. People who take them up as a life-long labour often end up with an illuminated address. The world loves illuminated addresses. It is only when people begin to get at the *causes* which breed soup kitchens and the like that real trouble begins. Then they are called very nasty names.

If only the suffering world knew what a number of people have their sorrow next their hearts and describe their theories for assuaging it over West-end dinner tables they would certainly look forward cheerfully to a New Jerusalem. But they don't. They still suffer. You see it is so extremely difficult for social reformers to become acquainted with them—except as

an idea. The uplifting of the poor looks so admirable on paper. Also it makes the life of reformers appear delightfully "fussy." Heaps of people imagine that they are of necessity doing a lot of good when they are always out of breath.

Personal Gossip.

Of all the nuisances of human life, there is none more tiresome than that race of mysterious beings whom everybody knows, most people have suffered from, and nobody has ever seen—I mean *They*. Who are *They*? Nobody has yet been able to tell. And yet, of all the wicked gossips—*They* are the most undaunted by Untruth. Moreover, *They* are always talking. *They* keeping nothing to themselves—ever. Of course, *They* are more intimate with some people than with others, and, seemingly, *They* prefer people buried in the depths of the country to those who live in the town. And yet, towns are full of Them. More's the pity! I wish that *They* could be taxed out of existence. The world would be a happier place, and people who don't know would talk less about it. As it is, *They* are invariably the boon-companions of the ignorant. It is always a sign that people don't know what they are talking about when they begin by telling us what *They say*. And *They* seem to be authorities on everything and everybody, from the hidden past of our next-door neighbour to the number of guns which the British army has concentrated behind their front in Flanders. And yet, though *They* rarely ever tell the truth, people still go on quoting Them, as if *They* had written the Bible, as *They* very probably did—the Old Testament at any rate. Talk about the mystery of the Jews, the Jews are a simple conundrum, like "Why does a hen cross the road?" besides that multitude of Beings who know a great deal more about your own affairs than you know yourself, and, for the most part, haven't a good word to say about either

sinners or saints from the North Pole to the South. In peace times *They* were mostly busy about the private concerns of individuals. Now *They* are busy over the war. *They* brought the Russians through England in the autumn of 1914. *They* won the war for the Allies almost before Germany had done sending out all her ultimatums. After which, *they* immediately *lost* the war for the Allies; and still *They* were wrong. But then. *They* never are right, and yet *They* still go on talking, and people still go on quoting what *They* say, believing it to such an extent that they pass the news on. People *are* funny, aren't they?

Conversations.

I OFTEN wonder what the famous old *salons* really were like. One reads of the brilliance of the conversations, the wonderful play of wit and intellect, and the exquisite picture of clever men and women showing of their best. But how was it done? What genius did the *salonière* possess which prevented her *salon* from degenerating into one dull old gentleman giving a monologue? For either the art of general conversation is lost or else the attraction of the *salon* belongs to mythology. Nowadays those people who have the reputation for being brilliant conversationalists usually belong to that vast army of unmitigated bores from which we pray heaven hourly to deliver us. Of course, if all the listeners met one of the talkers I can imagine that that personage spent quite a pleasant evening. But these old *salons* seem to have been crowded with brilliant conversationalists all being conversationally brilliant at the same time, and actually enjoying themselves. Experience, however, tells me that where even two or three talkers are assembled together, there they, individually, pass one of the longest evenings of their lives, and the ceiling is almost cracked from the rest of the company sending up prayers to heaven to be speedily delivered from this boredom.

Old Salons.

Perhaps, however, it is wiser not to cast a doubt upon the agreeableness of the old *salons*, but to declare positively that the art of conversation is dead. Every old lady and gentleman who have grandchildren will tell you that. But really what is general conversation? At worst it is no more than four people gathered together. At best it is a tête-a-tête in a dim light after a bottle of champagne. But these old *salons* were apparently crowded, and everybody was "sparkling" like the stalls on the first night of a new play at the St. James's. But is there anything more depressing than to be "sparkled" at by somebody whom somebody or other has once called witty? I don't think so. Reading of these famous *salons*, too, one gets the impression that the *salonière* sat on a kind of throne while all her clever and famous guests sat round in a ring, each one saying something illuminating and clever in turn. It must have been a frightfully boring party. The genius of the *salonière*, too, seemed to consist in "drawing out" all that was wisest and witty in her assembly. That, of course, must have been difficult, but a far more tricky affair is to shut these same people up again. Some people when once they have been drawn out won't draw in again until the hostess in desperation breaks up her own party. However, we must take these old *salons* for granted, and picture our Madame Recamier sitting in beauty upon a divan while she jerked her head this way and that as her guests let fall philosophical remarks destined for posterity.

Thinking.

But I am quite sure that a revival of the old *salon* is quite impossible to-day. One lately initiated into the art of golf would ruin a whole assembly of seers. Besides, literature being so cheap nowadays, few people

bother to think. They just put what they have read into their own words and make it sound dull. Otherwise you get that avalanche of chit-chat punctuated by, " So I told her straight out what I thought of her, and she's never spoken to me since ! " But of course to be a really interesting talker you must be a really interesting thinker, and thinking means time and solitude—the latter a situation at which the whole modern world seems more frightened than at death itself.

Clever Trifling.

I AM always amused at the different ways in which people pretend that they are gay and lively. Some show it by spending a vast amount of money on dinners and being rude to waiters. Others chatter all the time and imagine that if they show their front teeth steadily for several hours somebody will call them brilliant conversationalists. Some like to make a great noise and carry on a perpetual fire of banter, of which " You're another " is a vivid specimen of the repartee. Others, on the other hand, imagine that if they are daringly *décolleté* and make goo-goo "eyes" at everybody posterity will range them among the great fascinators of their generation. Not a few find a huge fund of hilarity in placing a cushion over the door and a piece of soap in the bed, while others hope that if they talk long enough and loud enough they may eventually utter a *mot* and claim the fame of being a wit for ever and ever afterwards. As a matter of fact, however, a brilliant light conversationalist is one of the rarest things in the whole world. Such a one is born, though time and experience may elaborate the gift. Lots of people talk—talk a great deal —but very few are worth listening to. Above everything else in gaiety there must be no sense of " strain." Better be silent than force your humorous " note." A witty conversationalist lies not so much

in what is said as the whimsical way a person says it. That is why so many books of humour invariably get "alleged" mentally inserted by the reader between brackets. That, too, is why so many people who amuse you once drive you frantic with boredom the second time. It is so difficult to be lightly amusing, and amusingly light, without being merely frivolous and "giggly."

Frightfulness.

From childhood to the grave we have to be dosed with "frightfulness" to make us good. When we are kiddies the policeman is a fine threat by which to bring on a sudden access of amiability to a refractory infant. When the police fail, a bogey makes a fine substitute. Later on, when we have outgrown our terror of ghosts, society has invented a bogey called "people," and what "people" will say forces heaps of men and women to keep close to that pathway in which the direction posts point to Heaven. I sometimes think that Hell must have been the invention of a tired ecclesiastic in whose parish the unruly element was getting out of hand. Most of us are good from sheer fright. Perhaps it is just as well. But I cannot think that Heaven is pleased at the sight of millions of human beings doing the right thing here upon earth for the promise of rich joys to come. However, if we are outwardly good we can, at least, look the whole world in the face. Besides, if we once accord the theory that people are virtuous because they are innately righteous, we naturally accord to the wicked the plea that they are wicked because they can't help it. And that would never do. For where would punishment and justice come in if people are what they are because they could not be otherwise if they tried? And after all, a good wholesome fear, if it does not prevent the real sinner from sinning, at least

keeps the *dilettante* out of the devil's own business. That alone is a surface victory. If you're really bad nothing in heaven or earth will make you good; just as if you're innately good, no temptation will undermine your steadfastness. But for the half-and-halfs we have made conventions. They keep the moral nondescripts nicely up to the mark. Hence their approval by the Mighty. In theory I am with the Mighty all the time; in practice, alas! I often find them bores. But then, I am always more or less bored by the people who, when they come across Naturalness, consider it "not nice." It is, I suppose, the instructive enmity of opposing points of view, and can't be helped. Yet, that doesn't lessen our suspicion of one another.

The Conventions.

Still, there they are—the Conventions—and you cannot get away from them any more than you can get away from the Albert Memorial, no matter how enthusiastically you pretend to be Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens. The result, too, is equally depressing. One often wonders how the conventions really arose. I don't, of course, mean the moral conventions which forbid you to take your neighbour's umbrella, even if it stands alongside of yours in the umbrella stand and looks twice as expensive; I mean the absurd little ones which decree that no woman should speak to a man she has not been introduced to, even if he looks as harmless as a handful of damp gunpowder and she has ceased even to try to look like thirty-nine.

To be successfully unconventional is a very difficult thing. It requires brains as well as a display of moral ankle. Most people fail hopelessly. They seem to consider that the first step towards being taken for a bohemian is to blazon forth the news that the ladies with whom they live are not their wives. As if anybody cared! Or, if they are women, they take tea

with bachelors in their rooms, sit cross-legged in public restaurants, consider that they have failed to live up to their theories if they do not openly advocate Free Love and generally look, not so much as if they required Free Love as a Free Bath. They always "do something," and aggressively look as if they did it. They are always studying effect. To be mistaken for a member of the respectable bourgeoisie is to be accounted "lost." They usually form a dingy little coterie of their own—these professional unconventionals—and extremely dull it is. When they have "done something" they go and live in Chelsea. When they are doing something they live in a Garden City, and when they have done nothing at all they let their hair grow long, cease using soap, and sit for hours and hours and hours in the Café Royal. People up from the country who go there to taste some of the best cooking in London see them, and are duly impressed. They imagine scenes of bacchanalian fury to be daily occurrences in their lives, or, if they happen to be poor, a garret, consumptive passion, lofty thinking, and a smoked herring. Just like that *sweet* Vie de Boheme.

Independence.

It is amusing to listen to the difference with which the sexes regard the word "Independence." A man thinks of it as the possibility of seeing the world, when and how he likes, enjoying himself with whom he likes, and saying exactly what he likes. A woman's view is simpler. She regards it as the power of being able to ask a man friend to her flat without a chaperon. It's not a disreputable ideal as long as she doesn't ask some other woman's man—as, alas! she very often does! At any rate, it is typical of the eternal feminine. Woman can't look at life except as a background of love, and a man can't live his life without thrusting

her sex in the face of every woman he comes in contact with. Which looks as if man and woman regard life in the same way. Yet they don't. A woman thinks only of love, a man thinks only of the woman —and between them lies a wide chasm of misunderstanding. When a woman is no longer there a man has other things to think about. Love to a woman, however, is, metaphorically speaking, *une grande illumination*. She was in the dark before—cramped, confined, childish. To a man love is usually merely another name for enjoyment. That is why the sexes will never understand each other in love, and women will always suffer and man eternally kiss and want to ride away.

Freedom.

Freedom has a purely personal and individual signification. To a few it merely spells licence, to others a kind of moral servitude. The sentimental regard it as the fullest expression of love. The world-worldly take it as implying a life best expressed by an epicurean dinner in an expensive restaurant with a 1914 Rolls-Royce "snorting" outside. The weary look upon it as a respite from work. The oppressed regard it as a cessation of slavery. No one can define it. It is just a nameless something which everybody wants and nobody gets. Most of us work to obtain it. A few think they obtain it without working. To all it means just that opportunity for self-expression which the gods invariably dangle out of our reach as a possible reward for continuing to live. It is the little philosopher's stone for which we are all searching. Nobody finds it, but everybody lives on the verge of its discovery. Otherwise. . . . Oh, but why talk of possible contingencies? Life is one perpetual expectation of finding that something, more beautiful than we have ever known, which we firmly believe awaits us just round the next corner.

As a matter of fact, freedom—complete, untrammelled freedom—comes to no man; cannot possibly come to him. You may scream your hardest of Liberty, both political and social, but it still remains in that little list of words the sound of which has, and always will, mesmerise the world. As with Liberty so with Justice and Patriotism and Right—they sound glorious shouted from a tub—but who can realise them? For each man, having different desires, different needs, sees freedom in a different light. The most that can be done by mankind is to see that not fewer laws are defied but that fewer laws are required. For if human nature were entirely perfect, freedom, as far as freedom is possible in a world where each man represents a different longing, would be comparatively easy. You cannot make people free either by destroying established institutions or by creating new ones. Each law is a sign not of strength but of weakness. You do not gain liberty by defying the law but by making it obsolete. A free people will be a people who do not need legislation to make them appear good—for that after all is everything the law accomplishes—but who do not require a law to keep a social order.

Selfishness.

Selfishness is a germ; it simply has to live in an atmosphere encouraging to its growth or it fades away and is harmless. And you always find it arm-in-arm with Unselfishness. The two simply have to go together. Really there are times when Unselfishness is as much to blame as Selfishness. Virtue, when carried to excess, does almost as much harm as vice, and it injures other people just as vice does. So with Unselfishness. It gives and gives and gives; and to be always giving there must be somebody who is always taking, taking, taking. The only thing is, Unselfish-

ness, being a virtue, the possessor is punished for it. Watch the face of a sublimely Unselfish person in repose. It is invariably sad. For the glorious feeling that you are giving up all that makes life precious for the good of someone you love is nearly always modified sooner or later by the unwelcome knowledge that most of the " glory " is wasted on someone who is not altogether worth such a sacrifice. But we always blame the Selfish person, forgetting that he, or she, has been made what he is by the Unselfish one who loves him. Anything we obtain easily we always " take for granted " in the long run. And the Selfish obtain the sacrifice of the Unselfish so easily—oh, so very easily! That is why they often give their love to someone who is utterly indifferent to their welfare. It is the things which escape our grasp that we long to cherish and hold. Who cares for a warm, sunny morning in August? It is a warm, sunny morning in December which obtains the pæans of thankfulness. All the same, that does not make the lot of the Unselfish one the less tragic. I somehow think there ought to be a special Heaven for those who have given up their lives for others. Their reward here on earth, is so paltry in comparison with the inner beauty which prompted their self-sacrifice. The Selfish grow fat, become pompous, die happy. The Unselfish also die with a smile upon their lips—but I sometimes think they smile because at last their life is over.

Unselfish Love.

All the same, I am perfectly certain that the Selfish never for one single moment know what love is. They may know passion—but that is only a part of love. Perhaps they are happier thus—I do not know. At any rate, only the Unselfish know love in all its glory, since love is both a supreme sacrifice and a supreme rest. This, then, is their reward—if love be a blessing, and of this I have my doubts. Only the Unselfish ever

know true happiness; just as only the Unselfish know what real misery can be. But, alas! happiness—real happiness—is fleeting, whereas the dull ache of being "taken for granted," held cheaply by those one worships, goes on and on, steadily increasing throughout the passing years. Still, in this life, it seems to me one must either suffer acutely or resemble a "turnip."

Relatives.

When everybody is somebody's relation—why do ninety-nine per cent. of people invariably abuse their own? *We*, personally, find other people's relatives charming; they find ours delightful. They why is life, for the most part, one continual escape by the back door when aunts, and uncles, and cousins enter by the front? It is very strange! We know dozens of people who, when our aunt's carriage stops at their door, will rush out hatless to greet her. But we—well, we rush out hatless too—but it is over the garden wall at the back and away up the side of the hill! Perhaps it is because relations are always so impertinently familiar—one to the other. Familiarity is supposed to be an undue intimacy in company. Well, it is—in a way. But to be kissed on both cheeks and to sit on a sofa hand-in-hand may possibly be familiar, but it is not impertinent, and the person who sits two yards away and demands an explanation of our conduct in life is impertinent—very. Friends do not do these things. Friendship is always too polite. But a fond relative does not think that she is fulfilling her duty unless she is perpetually wanting to know the reason why we are what we are and do what we do. One finds oneself playing "relative" with one's nephews and nieces, too, sometimes. No wonder our society often casts a gloom upon them. Yet other people's nephews and nieces welcome our coming with open arms, shouting the while, "Hurrah! We were afraid when we heard the bell you might be our Uncle John!" (Their Uncle

John, indeed!—quite the most charming man we have ever known!) Briefly, then, it seems to me that friends are only apparently familiar because they are polite, while relations are really familiar because they are usually rude.

Dead Relations.

However, a dead uncle is always "a dear." In fact, almost anybody dead possesses admirable qualities. When people are beyond recall is about the only time the world obtains a reasonable perspective of their virtues and vices. While they are alive and sitting opposite us at the same breakfast table, somehow the disturbing trumpeting of their nose-blowing minimises the goodwill we know to be overflowing in their hearts. So we sit beside them and snap. After all, it is just the same with our lives. Never was there such a dull neighbourhood as ours! And the awful people who inhabit it. And the dull monotony of their everlasting twaddle! We gasp in amazement when that dear, charming woman, who once lived next door, writes to say how she envies us living in such a gay and intellectual neighbourhood!

Yesterday.

It is the same, too, with Yesterday. Yesterday, as we look back upon it, was really rather pleasant. But To-day and To-morrow—they literally force from us the question as to why on earth we have been born? If the world could only have the shock of war without war's heartbreaking, suffering, and slaughter, people would consider it a very happy place to live in. Most of us never knew how to treat people; most of us never really knew how to live at all until death and disaster brought us face to face with the rock-bottom of all happiness—unselfishness, kindness, and the determination to live to the full each day's little moment of happiness before it slips into the unavailing past.

Flappers.

If the flapper were only as foolish as she looks the world might be able to deal with her, but often when she has outgrown the flapper futilities she develops into a very sweet and very lovable woman. I always feel so sorry for girls who have been flattered in their youth. When they wake up to realities the awakening is often so desolate. It seems to me that morally everyone should be given a second chance. Life ought to be divided into two parts. Up to thirty everything should be forgiven a man and woman. The first thirty years of life are the years of mistakes, of perverted vision, of false ideals, of blunders, of outside influences. After all, one forgives and forgets the faults of a child. Why not also forgive and forget the faults of youth? How can you fight the world until you know the world? And no one knows the world before thirty, a woman least of all. I know lots of women who are fifty and know as little of real life as a canary shut up in an aviary. I know heaps of married women who only catch visions of reality through their husband's spectacles, and then only the visions he deems it prudent for them to see. What do they know of life and its temptations and pitfalls who have gone from one comfortable home to another and slept in a feather bed with a hot-water bottle every night of their lives? Nothing; less than nothing, because often what they do know of life is all wrong. This gives an unshakable belief in morality by Acts of Parliament. This makes them so extraordinarily uncharitable one to the other.

Love.

Love is in men's life a thing apart. When a woman isn't in the mood for kisses—she's ill. All the same, the tokens of love should be swift, vivid, gloriously

fleeting. To slobber in one's sentiment is an excruciating *nunque d'art*. Love should resemble a fathomless sapphire night illuminated from time to time by the blaze of a falling star. Most lovers, however, deluge it with a kind of super-saccharinated Milky Way, giving a blurred effect. After one of them has remarked, "How wonderful!" there remains nothing more to be said. Love is indeed an art—the greatest and most difficult art in the whole world. Moreover, it is an Impressionist, even a Post-Impressionist, art. To paint your passionate vision in the crude colours of a poster is to make it appeal not to the connoisseur, but to the common in the crowd. Most people, too, are neither capable of either loving or being loved. Like the animals they are seized from time to time by a kind of vulgar attraction which they express in the terms of vulgarity. For the first few weeks of their bliss they gorge themselves with love's sweetmeats and then spend the rest of their lives together suffering from acute indigestion. The world is full of lovers trying to recover a healthy appetite by enormous doses of Contrexeville water, otherwise known as "making the best of things." The great enemy of love, after indifference, is too much of it. After all, one doesn't only begin to realise the existence of one's brother until one has received from him a blow in the eye. In the same way there are more weighty ways of showing one's devotion than by bouncing perpetually on the loved one's knees. Floods of tears at a funeral and odes to a girl's eyes invariably leave me rather cold. But the bunch of flowers laid on a grave long since green, the love which grows bigger and stronger with the passing years—these things are among the most divine incidents of life.

Now of all the tests of love the greatest is the test of matrimony. It is comparatively easy to give up one's life to one's beloved. The difficulty is to be passably

polite at breakfast-time. Most married people swear eternal slavery to each other once, and then spend the rest of their lives convulsively clutching the marmalade pot. It is so easy to die for someone; so much harder to live with them. By the institution of marriage mankind has placed the most terrific trial not only on himself but on Love. Passion is a lure; wedding bells ring in the hosts of the Evil One. Considering how little the average couple know of one another before they bind themselves to each other irrevocably, it is wonderful how many peaceful households there are in the world. It has been suggested, however, that this peace is only a truce, and that some prefer murder! For alas! the average human being is not big enough for matrimony. Marriage demands qualities of which few but the gods are composed. It is at once too ideal and too intimate for the ordinary man and woman. Most cease to find a solution to the conundrum after a few years and settle down comfortably to be commonplace. But satiety and the commonplace are the two worst enemies of love. The truly *grande amoureuse* sees that neither the one nor the other is allowed, as it were, to deck out Cupid in such a forlorn bonnet. If I were asked to give advice I would say to women, flirt with your own husband without throwing yourself at his head; and to men—ah! but men need no advice. In love it is always the woman who calls the tune. Her art consists in being always watching to see that her lover is ready to dance to it.

Everybody's Idea.

But then, of course, everybody—even the office boy—is *the* authority on love. But sometimes when I see a husband walking into a restaurant before a forlorn wife, and a pretty woman making herself cheap to other men before her own husband, I am tempted to cry out, "Thou fool!" For the woman who lets her

husband treat her "anyhow" deserves to waddle into a public place after him, and she who gets to believe that because her husband happens to be married to her he ceases to be human deserves to find out when she is obese and peroxide that one's fascinations are best employed upon the person with whom one must longest live. But, of course, one could go on giving advice on love until one was either a bore or a co-respondent.

First Love.

Love is proverbially blind. Thank Heaven it is! As I sit in the tube railway carriages and look at the row of usually dull, uninteresting, nearly always stupid and occasionally bestial faces opposite me, I marvel to think that somewhere in this world someone is listening anxiously for their approaching footfall, holding out the arms of their inmost being to clasp them in a tender, lingering embrace. (For the benefit of those who would here add, "And what about you?" let me hasten to assert that those people are in all probability thinking exactly the same thing about me. But—no matter. A *tu quoque*, if I may so express it, is always allowable after a criticism on faces.) It does not alter the fact that the pompous elderly gentleman, the dull young man, the muddy-skinned, tow-coloured haired suburban Miss, present in somebody's eyes all that is desirable, lovable, and beyond reach in this world of "kultur" and the next, where let us hope there isn't any. It does not alter the fact, also, that the husband and wife, who now sit bored, callous, and indifferent in each other's society, once upon a time were ready to forego an eternal heaven for one hour's clasping of hands in the darkness of a cinema show. It is the same in our own case. The girls we have loved, the girls we have thought beautiful, the woman for whom we were ready to die—where are they now? Where

are they, I ask? Well, they are probably at home, very slightly changed in appearance from the days when we used to think of them and love them. They are as in days of yore. But as we look at them we say, "What *frights*! What unconscionable bores! What *bromides*!" And will the "sweet angel" who now has our soul and its fate in the hollow of her dainty hand—will she, too, one day join the army of "horrors" we have escaped from? Love answers, "*Never, never, never.*" But experience answers, "*Perhaps.*" It is all very disturbing, isn't it?

Changes.

It is so easy, so appallingly easy, for people to lose touch one with the other. Outwardly we change; inwardly we change no less. Nothing is stationary in our souls. If we make no progress we go backwards until we stand desolate and alone. The key of love is not found merely through the wedding march and a gold ring. If we want to keep love we must fight to keep it. It does not remain with us by itself. When lost it is lost for ever. To have the soul of another in our hands is a great charge, and a great charge is not fulfilled without a great self-sacrifice. And Love and Death are the only realities of life.

Our Passionate Escapes.

What horrors most of us would be breakfasting with if Fate had been unkind enough to marry us to our First Love. Think of it, women! That genial, tubby, little gentleman who fails to hide an ever-growing *embonpoint* beneath a washing waistcoat—how you loved and cherished for a few days the lock of lank hair he gave you over the garden wall when you were home after your second term at Girton. Think, gentlemen! That appalling woman whose hair has become

red with age and whose fatuous remarks have killed one husband and blighted the life of a second—how you cherished that rose she gave you the night before that tragic morn when you rushed blindly down to the river to commit suicide and then decided to pass through life the personification of Blighted Hope instead, simply because she had the cruelty to dance three times running with the other fellow! Even the woman you eventually married has given you some horrid surprises, but she is a goddess to that self-satisfied lump of maturity you thought an angel from Heaven years ago. For Time, alas! although a healer, is equally a destroyer, and the *alter ego* of yesterday may bore us silly to-morrow.

Nothing Ever Twice.

NOTHING ever twice and nothing the same for long—those are two axioms of life. We are not the same as we were yesterday; we shall be different again to-morrow. That is why so many people find relations such a nuisance. Relations never forget yesterday. They judge you by it and are blind to the heights you are striving to attain to-day. That, too, is why people whom we met an hour or two ago often know us more intimately, more completely, than those who have lived in the same house with us for years. And this makes the adventure of marriage often such a perilous thing. For it is truism that propinquity, while essential to passion, is often the death of love. You must get away from a person from time to time in order to obtain a sense of perspective. Perpetual nearness narrows things too horribly. You must grow together or you will outgrow one another. That is why so many lovers eventually become enemies. It is so difficult to always keep in sight the best that is in the other the while that "other" makes a whistling noise when eating soup. It is so easy to lose touch with a

woman's soul who sleeps with her mouth wide open and snores. And yet soup-music and night-roars are trivial, unimportant things beside those innately noble qualities which make our loved ones what they are. It is not so much that devotion dies as it becomes so dusty. To be loved for ever you must deserve love all the time. There is no final victory in passion. You must seek continually to keep the flame alive or you must resign yourself to an existence of humdrum toleration among its embers.

Marriage.

And the average marriage—what a "toleration" it is! It is rarely very unhappy; but more rarely is it happy. Mostly it is a kind of detention in which one goes his own way and the other makes the best of it. And it started so well! It began with such a flourish of "promises." She thought he was the nicest man she had ever met. He considered her the prettiest girl of his acquaintance. They danced together lots of times, and he took her for long afternoons down the river. When no one was looking he kissed her and she kissed him. It was all delightfully exciting. Then there were the wedding presents; furniture to buy, congratulations. On the wedding day they both swore the most solemn vows without the least notion of what they were swearing and with little or no determination ever to live up to them, except in a general kind of way. *Of course*, she would obey him—how silly! Of course, he would be faithful to her—how absurd! They spend the honeymoon in Devonshire, and after the first few days become rather bored. He wanted to get back to work; she wanted to realise the joy of showing herself a married woman among her unmarried girl friends. The excitement of housekeeping drew them together again, and for a long time they were the jolliest couple in Surbiton. She laughed at all his jokes; she loved

to do so. He admired all her new hats; it would have been hateful to refrain. Presently she heard his jokes so many times that she forgot to laugh; he was hurt. Presently he forgot to admire her new hats; she was inordinately offended. "My wife's a dear," he exclaimed sadly, "but unfortunately she hasn't a vestige of a sense of humour." "He is beginning to lose his love for me," she moaned to herself, regarding a six-guinea triumph of chip straw and one flower. "He never noticed my new hat."

Then after a time he ceased to tell her his "best stories," and began to find fault with her extravagance; and she began to keep her old clothes for his benefit, and considered his criticism very unkind.

So things drifted on, because they are far too good-natured, both of them, to quarrel for long. They are happy? Of course they are happy! How absurd of anybody to doubt it! Only she, the wife, is very dull, and he, the husband, begins to look forward to evenings at his club. And so they develop apart. If no catastrophe falls upon them, in a few years they will be quite strangers to each other; should there be no children they may even grow to hate each other. It is all a question of time. For neither of these two young people have been through the mill of fate which grinds exceedingly small. She has lost sight of his unselfishness, his manly devotion, his uprightness, through the absurd fuss he makes about dining out and going to the theatre after his day's work in the City is done. And he—he is blind to his wife's pitiful efforts to please him through her inability to understand that the meat bill unpaid last quarter will be doubly large the next.

Marriages for Money.

It makes a girl's life very complicated when she sets out with the determination to make a success of it by

a great marriage. Great marriages are not made in Heaven, and Heaven—even when it has to deal with love—is a perfectly rotten match-maker as a rule. It is all very well to grow up with a fixed determination that Money and Social Position and Matrimony will all come together; the unfortunate part is that a man must necessarily come with them—and some men are such bounders, aren't they? Besides, there's a little thing inside—even the most callous girl—which poets call " a heart " and the prosaic put down to " a touch of the spring." At any rate, it upsets all calculations and creates muddle where before the greatest serenity reigned. Of course, if we hadn't complicated human life by Religion and Morality and the Conventions and the Thing—the end would be quite simple. We should live with those we loved until we loved them no more —when, hey presto ! we should pack up our trunks and deposit ourselves on the doorstep of the wealthy. But we are not supposed to do these things. When we fall in love we are expected to marry, and when we marry we are expected to remain married for ever and ever and ever—or until they call the undertaker in to us. So we are faced with the alternative of having what we want and living to regret it, or going without it voluntarily, and living to wish we hadn't. In either case, life is rotten. But then, it is mostly rotten in every case, isn't it? So we might as well take what we want and trust to a railway accident, or something of that kind, to deliver us when our " delirium of joy " has become an affliction.

Advice.

It always amuses me to listen to the elderly advising the young whom they should marry and whom they should avoid. " Young man ! " they cry sententionsly, " Don't marry the girl who smokes, or the girl who bites her nails, or the girl whose placket-hole is always

open, or the girl who makes eyes, or the girl who ties up her stockings with string, or the red-headed girl, or the girl with a ferocious mother, or the girl who has gone wrong." And the young man replies, "No, father." Yet in a few weeks' time it may be, he openly declares himself "not half good enough" for a young woman who fails in all these things. But then, on the other hand, the young woman's mother has probably warned her daughter against men who drink, who swear, who love eating, who run after any woman who looks at them twice, who gamble, who don't wash, and who possess a nose the colour of a boiled lobster. And our young man is, alas! all these things. But the girl had a prety face and a flattering tongue, and she laughed at his jokes, cooed to him one evening in the moonlight, and told him how miserable she was at home. So the young man immediately placed her on Olympus, saved up all his money, and set up his "own heart's darling" in a "nest" in the suburbs. And the girl, looking at the young man, thought his swearing "manly," and his nose a "healthy colour," and his love of eating "refined," and his frailty "the sign of an artistic temperament," and his gambling propensities the promise of "high finance," while as for his love of drink, her own good influence would speedily cure him of that. So she accompanied him to the nest, and has been warning other girls against men like her husband ever since. But then, her husband has been doing the same thing. You should hear him dilate on the tragedy of a man who marries a girl whose stockings are tied up with string!

The Difficulties of Living Together.

MARRIAGE is perhaps the most solemn trust that any man or woman can undertake. Yet the majority of them enter upon it with the heedless gaiety of going

on a roundabout. A wife must know (a) how to manage a house, (b) how to bring up and educate young children, (c) how to appear " ideal " before her husband while at the same time remaining human, (d) how to bind him to her without showing him the ropes, and (e) how to give to their devotion that element of the chase which nearly all masculine love needs. Why is a plain woman so often much more fascinating than her lovelier sister? Simply because ever since she's had her hair up she's been up against odds. Well, in matrimony people are up against tremendous odds. It is infinitely easier to lure a man than to keep him happily at your side. In the same way it is far easier for a man to make a woman say " Yes " than to keep her from later on repenting bitterly she didn't say " No." Most things blue and white and fluffy will get a man. To keep him needs a kind of combination of Ninon de l'Enclos, Mrs. Beeton, Harriet Martineau, with a dash or two of Cecile Leitch for his more " sporty " moments. In the same way a man needs the lovableness of Nelson, the tenderness of a good woman, the bravery of Richard Cœur de Lion, and a figure which does not look too ridiculous outside a crowd. The quality a man and woman must share is a sense of humour. Without it marriage often ends in mental murder.

Illusion.

It seems to me that the elderly would be much better employed in telling the young of the danger lurking in those situations which make a piece of inferior human clay look like a god fashioned in gold. They ought to warn them not so much against types as against cosy corners. Nearly every woman is adorable to a man when she makes eyes at him and he has had a glass of wine. In the same way every man is superior to his fellow-men who has asked a woman to marry him

or threatened to go to the dogs if she would not. Real love is not felt by 99 per cent. of men and women. They are incapable of it. What makes them imagine they have reached Heaven at last is one part physical attraction and one part flattery. The beginning of that state may be a sea voyage, or a kiss in the conservatory or an uninhabited island, or even a new hat. If the only man in England were 4ft. nothing and had a face like an underdone beetroot, more than half the women would admire "ugly little men." In the same way, one of the less-frequented colonies is the most sure and certain place wherein a plain woman can hear herself described as being "beautiful." Personally, if I were a woman, I would long to leave Balham, which spoke of me as "a pity she's so plain," even if I had to go to the wilds of farthest Alaska to hear myself called "lovely." Love and death are the only really thrilling moments in life after all, as we realise—too late.

Middle-aged Love.

Perhaps the most divine time for love to come is after a long period of sentimental starvation. Love to rush towards us too often and too early ceases to possess any heavenly qualities at all. We hold cheaply everything that we obtain too easily, whether it be success or kisses. People talk about the wonderful gift of beauty, but a woman who has been lovely all her life does not know half the ecstasy of a plain woman who at last finds a man who thinks she's a Venus. To be born too beautiful is as unfortunate as to be born too rich. The gift the gods give one at birth are not nearly so enchanting as those we earn for ourselves. If I were a woman I would sooner have a face full of "possibilities" than all the natural loveliness of Helen of Troy after a good night. I would know that on account of the struggle I should have to go through to claim my

share in admiration and love I should attain a variety, a vivacity, and a sympathetic charm which would keep the men who were once my slaves in their lowly estate of admiration long after fat had begun to get the better of my corset bones. A beautiful woman has simply to be beautiful, and she can hear "I love you" whispered into her ear at every hour of the day and long after she has learnt to yawn at the repetition. That is the reason why beautiful women are often so appallingly dull after you have ceased to wonder at their beauty. But an almost-plain woman cannot afford to let people realise that she is anything but almost beautiful. She has to make the best of herself. She has to learn the art of dressing, the art of talking, the art of friendship. She has to cultivate her mind as well as her heart, and she reaps her reward in hearing herself spoken of as charming and fascinating, *chic* and clever. But few people realise the study which has gone to obtain that charm and "cleverness" and fascination. Fewer still guess how sweet the triumph is to her—all the sweeter because the victory has been so hardly earned.

The Handicap of Beauty.

No. A woman who has been born beautiful has been born with a handicap, even though she does not realise that she has lost the race for real love until she is middle-aged. Who cares to talk to a woman of whom the only thing you can say about her is "that she was perfectly lovely when she was a girl." But the fascinating, charming woman is as fascinating and charming at twenty-five as she is at fifty, and, in cultivating those interests with which she has interested others, she has sown quite a number of thrilling moments for herself, to be reaped when she has ceased to care whether a man looks at her with admiration or because she resembles his mother.

Lady Hamilton.

Lady Hamilton was one of those poor women who were born too beautiful. It gave her very little real fun. If she had been born in the station of life to which she later attained, she would have had absolutely none at all. As it was she *had* the excitement of prancing from a nurserymaid to the intimate friendship of a queen. But, as far as love was concerned, she hardly enjoyed herself once. Lady Hamilton never really loved anyone. Poor thing, she hadn't a chance. The moment she began to fall in love with some man he fell much more quickly in love with her. But, to really attain love's summits of divine joy, there is nothing so conducive as a few weeks' belief that your devotion is unrequited. Alas, poor Lady Hamilton never felt that joy. Before she had begun to admire a man he was threatening to kill himself at her feet should she say him nay. The consequence was that her heart became atrophied. She gave herself up to the struggle for social success which evaded her, and that worldly power and glory which she never attained. I am quite sure that she enjoyed the triumph of having the famous Nelson her slave in public more than any words of tenderness he may have whispered into her ear in private. Proof of this lies in the fact that she could not keep faithful even while he lived. But none of her numerous liaisons with different men seemed to give her any personal joy. She " fell " the first time more from an inability to say " No," than any uncontrolled desire to say " Yes." But a thrilling *grande passion* does not begin that way. In fact, all her falls from grace seem to have arisen from an inability to contradict. She said " No " once or twice, and then, because he still persisted, she shrugged her shoulders, said " Oh, very well," and began to count the flies on the ceiling.

The Missed Track.

The world is full of bewildered women who have missed their way. They wander about, veritable personifications of tragedy, cowering behind a smile. To me they are the saddest sight on God's earth—the more sad because so many unimaginative people find them ridiculous. Like the heroine of one of Mr. Avron Strawbridge's admirable translations of old French "Chansons," they too have once upon a time sung :—

When I was young I was as gay,
I was as fresh as the flowers of May,
Luronne Lurette, Luronne Luré—
And my eyes were blue
And my hair was gold,
But no one remembers that
Now I'm old—
Old and grey
Like the end of a day!
Luronne Lurette, Luronne Luré.

But now—now that they are middle-aged and lonely—who cares? No one. The world does not weep because they are the victims of a social code which everybody preaches and few take the trouble to fulfil. It simply calls them "old maids," and passes them by. Poor things, they have taken the world at its word, and those who mould their destinies on the desires of the multitude always end by missing everything which makes life beautiful. Usually, too, they die disillusioned and lonely. That, of course, is exactly what the world wishes. There is nothing quite so disturbing as the person who is living his or her own life according to their own ideals. They confront us like a moral challenge, and no one likes to be challenged upon those higher aims which one

has talked a good deal about and striven to reach but rarely. The person who swallows copybook maxims generally ends by being shut up in the book and put away on the topmost shelf. When I see around me thousands and thousands of poor middle-aged women doing their duty towards God and man, and getting miserably paid for it—working, working, working, and every day, every year, getting a little older, a great deal plainer, I ask myself, "What will be the end of it all when they are past labour and no man wants them?" A man can always go out and get drunk, but a woman—one slip, and she is ostracised for ever. The worst of it is, too, that society insists upon women—no matter what their age—keeping inside cotton wool, and yet offers them absolutely no reward for so doing. The tragedy of the million superfluous women is a tragedy which has never been written—a tragedy which could never be written because, if compiled, it would be improper, or not exactly nice—but at which the angels in Heaven, who understand, must weep over every day of their lives. They alone understand most poignantly the meaning of "desolate"—than which there is no sadder word in the whole dictionary.

Loneliness.

For a man need never be lonely; but a woman, when she is middle-aged and alone, is rarely anything else. One of the saddest places in the whole world is the little sanctuary in a London church allotted to Silent Prayer. For not every desolate heart has the consolation of "Annette," who sang:—

And when my last sun shall have set
And the moon veils her face from poor old Annette,
He'll be waiting there . . . for he won't forget.

Luronne Luré, Luronne Lurette.
And he'll kiss my eyes
That they thought were dim,
And my eyes will grow young
When they rest on him;
And he'll whisper, "Annette!"
Luronne Luré, Luronne Lurette.

Most people are lonely because they have never dared to live. They usually wake up ten years too late.

Living for Others.

For men can drown most sorrows in hard work, but women, as the moral code for women is now constituted, have to sit at home idly struggling to hide their regret. They are expected to live for others—a comfortable theory, *for other people*—and to keep themselves "ladies," under all circumstances look pleasant, and knit. Even married women—for one can be even lonelier married than when alone—have nothing with which to drug the present if the present, as so often it is, be merely the tragic inheritance of the past. A reform of the divorce laws will make more for human happiness than all the People's Budgets which were ever compiled and quarrelled over. I am convinced that English Sundays and unhappy marriages have been the cause of more human downfalls than all the evildoers who ever did evil. For marriage means so many things. It is either an inspiration or a debasement; there can be no jog-trot dead level in any alliance between the sexes. Nor is unhappiness in marriage necessarily the result of wandering affection and chit-chat over the breakfast table. There is the tragedy of the lonely woman.

Always—Always.

It is always when one is lonely that the Devil pops in for tea. If you desire to remain a *persona grata* at the Court of the Angels, keep smiling, if you can, but keep busy—*always*. Loneliness can be accountable for almost any folly. I think it was Nietzsche who once said that debauch is not so much a sign of happiness as of misery. It was one of the truest things he ever said. So few of us—so very, very few of us—can stand quite alone. We all need the touch of a human hand, the welcoming smile of a human eye. God seems so far away when we are really lonely, and we seek Him, in desperation, as one seeks forgetfulness in vice and drink. It is not that we care for viciousness or alcohol, but the dull ache of the lonely heart is often more difficult to bear than physical agony. So we seek assuagement anywhere—anywhere—as one seeks a sedative in intense pain. After a semblance of happiness or comradeship, or love, folly is better than the bleak loneliness of a hungry heart silently watching the passing of Youth, knowing all the while that each moment as it passes is a moment for joy lost, bearing us nearer—and nearer—to that instant when we shall exist in the world on polite sufferance—a kind of human wreck which isn't worth saving, and is left derelict for the waves of time to wash away.

Vice.

Loneliness is usually the chief cause of men and women "making idiots of themselves"—according to their neighbours. It is very easy to keep within the trim borders of moral and social rectitude when you are surrounded by love and are plentifully supplied with the world's goods—as the world knows what "good" is. But there are some people who, maybe behind the oldest, plainest features, are holding out

their arms in yearning towards someone to love, someone to love them, someone upon whom to shower all those gifts of self-sacrifice, unselfishness, and devotion which alone seem to give human life a divine object. So love is always pitiful, even when it looks *ridiculous*! It is always infinitely more beautiful and wonderful than the lover who has inspired it. Love —and Loneliness . . . the words are inseparable! They follow each other in the history of human passion as two relentless sequences, the one of the other. The human heart—if it be human and really a heart —must have someone to love and cherish, some hand to clasp in tenderness and understanding. Without it the lives of most people are without an object—and, indeed, most human lives do seem objectless—just a dull passing-away of weeks and years until the end. So sometimes in despair they turn to counterfeits of an Ideal. The world condemns them; they too, are miserable and unhappy. But the man and woman in agony do not stop to consider the advisability of sedatives. They just take them—because the pain makes them imagine that they are ready and willing to pay any price.

Someone to Love.

The cynic puts down this yearning for love in every human heart as one part physical and the other part vanity. Well, perhaps there is in it much of both these emotions. But there is also a longing—especially in the hearts of those people who have outlived their early calf-illusions—to feel that there is someone in all the big, wide, lonely world who knows and understands them, who look up to them and believes in them, for whom they are the "only one," and with whom they may realise those sentimental dreams which life has frightened into hiding, but has never

really killed. In a word, it is a desire to live *naturally* which makes so many people "surprise their neighbours into ridicule." The world detests really natural people. Naturalness seems like a challenge to all the "shams" before whom we bow the knee.

Naturalness.

And it seems to me that this yearning to be natural is but another way of expressing loneliness. The reason the world is so lonely is that the world refuses to live close to nature. It is always creating false gods and standing on their pedestals to harangue other people. Most people are never natural, even with themselves. They speak for effect, they live for effect, and they pretend to ignore love and friendship and passion—for effect. But, deep down in the hearts of many, there is the silent protest against Things-as-they-are. Surges in the soul a yearning to live Things-as-the Soul-knows-them-to-be. And the soul's despair against the unequal fight against the world often forces people to commit follies which ought rather to be met with pity than with ridicule.

Love-letters.

Love Letters are the saddest literature in the whole world. They are not less sad because they so often provoke a smile. Love is such a fraud. It makes us think and speak in terms of eternity, and often it does not survive a week-end. The girl we loved with all the ardour of our youth—where is she now? She is probably married to another and better man. How we thank Heaven for it! The married woman, for whom a little later we were yearning to go through the Divorce Court, just because she smiled at us and called us her "boy"—what has become of her now? She

is still "tied" to the same man who is still "unworthy" of her, but, instead of calling her the sweetest, dearest and most beautiful woman in the whole world, we look at her and murmur, "Good God, *What an Escape*!" It is the same with women. The youth whose hint of savagery we used to call "manliness" we now find rather uncouth. This is because we are now in love with a man who is very refined and changes his clothes three times a day. That other fellow, whose devotion to us made us forget the fact that he was only five feet high, what a "wretched creature" he looks beside the six-feet Reginald whom we now adore!

Love the Deceiver.

And so it is all through life. Love is life's greatest deception. Through love the soul is always—if I may express it slang-wise—getting done. Every time we loved we were so terribly in earnest, so frightfully sure that our lover was all that we wanted him or her to be. Never in the whole of our life had we ever loved so passionately before, nor would ever do so again. There was something glorious about our sincerity. Nobody in the world had ever loved as we did. All our past infatuations had merely been a series of unimportant overtures to the present love-drama. The new devotion is the devotion of all our life. Never shall we love again—*never*, *never*, *never*! But alas! for our eternal protestations, we do love again—and not only do we love again but we love again and again. No wonder, then, that, when we see lovers clasped in each others' arms, our first instinctive feeling is to smile. Their passion is so beautiful and so ephemeral. But we always feel a sneaking affection for them in our hearts. Love is such an adorable thing—and we look back upon it at the end of our days with the same affection as we recollect

old associations, old school friends, and old dolls. But the fraud of love makes some people grow bitter. That is because love has been badly taught. If at the end of every love poem there were the explanation that the above protestations are none the less beautiful and sincere because they were not lived up to, young people would enjoy love just as much, yet, at the same time, would not expect too much of it. But the world is always talking about eternal devotion and hearts which keep faithful and true for ever, and ever, and ever. Consequently Madeleine considers that she has been defrauded when, after two years of happy married life, Algernon, whom she has never left for an instant, has very little conversation left for her after the soup. The *femme incomprise* is nearly always the wife who expected too much. It is difficult enough to live up to our own ideal, it is impossible—rather irritating—to be obliged to try to live up to somebody else's idea of what we ought to be. The reproachful eye is always annoying. If young people were told that the real labour of love begins after marriage, not before it, we should not see so many couples with nothing to say to one another, and husbands and wives only realising how dear they are to each other when, as it were, a bomb is about to explode between them. The world leads young lovers to suppose that matrimony is the triumphant finale to a few months' flirtation, some poetical quotations, a little music, one or two lovely summer nights, and two families in complete agreement; whereas matrimony is a long succession of Monday mornings, an unromantic familiarity, and all the unforeseen dangers which beset two people forced to inhabit the same house. There are many awful lessons of cheerfulness unselfishness, and a convenient blindness to be learnt, and some soul-shattering revelations to be realised and smiled at before a man and

woman become that happy combination known as an "ideally happy couple."

Love's Secrets.

Passing as nearly all love is, its secrets should yet be sacred. For love is the one thing eternal in human nature, even though the object before whom it showers its treasures changes with the passing of time. The love-letters of youth—they were so sincerely written and felt long ago, even though to-day their high-falutin' sounds exaggerated and absurd. Therefore they should be treated with respect. The ideal love—the love which wears well and makes of life a happier and more peaceful place—is a journey's end, the heart's journey's end. But it only comes after years of storm, and there is so much friendship in it and so little hot passion. That kind of love is the soul's haven. It is the most perfect thing in all life. Letters breathing passion are not worth the paper they are written on—eternally speaking, I mean—but the devotion which a man gives to a woman in his calmer moments, when he is lonely, or unhappy, or old, is far more wonderful and real. After all, what is love—pasionate love, I mean—but a passing fever? When it is over we laugh at it, and wonder how, in the name of all that is sensible, we could ever have been so foolish. But we never laugh at the steadfast devotion of our normal moments, because this devotion belongs to all that is grave and serious and tender in our inner lives. Tragedy happens when the woman takes a man's passing fancy for unfaithfulness —whereas, usually it is a merely physical need, and he gets over it as he gets over measles. It is a hard lesson to learn, but it is wonderful how many women learn it. In love, a man, whatever his age may be, never grows up. But in the love of a woman there

is something of the permanence of maternal feeling. She imagines that love, and yet more love, is all that is needed to keep a man's eccentric fancy. But it isn't. It is all that is needed to keep a man's real devotion, but opportunity and a " glad eye " arouse something within him that has nothing whatever to do with love, and he would laugh at you if you suggested that it did. It is matrimony's misfortune—but there is nothing in it really; nothing, that is to say, which makes a man's wife any less to him than the one woman he really loves and is happy with in the whole of the wide world.

Destiny.

Destiny is a most wonderful story-teller! Everyone's life is a drama—more or less. And Destiny, as a weaver of plots, stands absolutely unrivalled; but, as a " producer," he is absolutely rotten. Most dramas of life are wretchedly " cast." The wrong people are playing the wrong parts—comedians are made to play tragedy *rôles* and tragedians are " cast " for the comic characters. Yet, out of the inhuman muddle there arises a certain symmetrical idea. It is blurred, and it may be so illogical as to be tragic; or, again, it may be an almost perfect specimen of a real fairy-tale; but, whether it be badly constructed, wretchedly played, because hopelessly ill-cast, or whether it be a brilliant idea perfectly carried out, the general effect is disappointing; the last act, in spite of its often comic situations ends for the most part with a sob behind the player's smile. Thus we pin our faith on an Eternal Life wherein things will be better organised—and hope eternally for the best. On the whole then, it is better to be born with a putty-coloured soul. With a putty-coloured soul, tragedy or ironic comedy come equally easily. You carry a smile of blissful

self-satisfaction through both. Few things can hurt those of a putty-coloured soul—except a bang on the head. Wanting little else but creature comforts, they generally manage to get them, the attainment being its own punishment. They are the "yearners," the strivers, the idealists who are always facing a head wind. And the more they push onward the fiercer becomes the gale; and very, very few reach their desired destination—the majority are blown over the cliff. On the whole, then, the human Mollusc has the best time of it, although he may not know it. The human Mollusc clings tenaciously to its own cabbage patch, and between him and the outer world there is a shell of almost impenetrable hardness. He never sees the glory of the sunrise, the loveliness of the flowers and sky; he never thrills to poetry and music and all forms of perfect beauty; he desires neither love nor friendship. He is "dead" maybe, but then, the "*dead*" *never suffer*, do they? It is the mental suffering of the average human soul which makes of the average human life, in spite of all its laughter and trimmings, a perfect little bit of Hell.

Distance.

As I sit and write I can see a picture hanging on the wall of flaming golden sunset, trees, and dark shadows. From where I sit—some distance away—it appears to be a picture full of imagination and beauty. But I have examined it at close quarters, and it is only an amateur's awful daub. Doubtless the artist yearned to paint his picture as I see it from a distance; all he accomplished in doing was a waste of time and labour and paint and paper on a water-colour picture whose real destination ought to be the top of a good fire. And this failure to accomplish what he set out to do is rather like the average

human life. We plan to do such wonderful things, and all we succeed in doing is—well, if not little, something so entirely different and less splendid than we strove and prayed to do. We begin life with a fervent belief that we can arrange our own story. We haven't time to fulfil the "romance" that is in us before something happens and we suddenly find ourselves in the middle of a plot which does not seem to belong to us at all, in which we are utterly uncomfortable and unhappy, and in which all that we really are is utterly and entirely wasted. For a time we fight against the machinations which seem to haunt our footsteps with all the spirit of a blood-red revolutionary. Then when the fight appears too long and the forces of the enemy seem too powerful, we gradually grow cynical. And cynicism is a sure sign of defeat. Or we become hard—an equally certain sign that we have been worsted. But the wise will gradualy recover from the ruin. They will fight less and dream more, and, although their dreams will remain unrealisable dreams, they will—such is the yearning of the human soul for "romance"—be no less precious for that. They will continue to play their *rôle* in the drama of life with the inner smile of those for whom a hope deferred has not made the heart sick in truth. They will play it just as badly, perhaps, but they will play it without that self-consciousness which is the sign of those who are ill at ease. For these dreams have become to them more real than the daily incidents of life itself. For these dreams they live and hope and endure, and they die at length in the hope that they will all come true—in Heaven. And then suddenly, in the midst of this tragic farce which most of us are made to play, there come moments of the *real* life which we had planned for ourselves, prayed for, and hoped to live. Their sweetness becomes

the more poignant as we grow older and perceive dimly the strange muddle of perverted ways which is to be our path through life. When we are young we take these moments as our right, fondly believing that they will last and repeat themselves in ever-increasing splendour throughout our lives or until we have attained our dream. When we are old we realise clearly they were but the jewels which of necessity each one must discover if he search long and ardently enough. They become to us the most lovely of all memories, but we realise that they meant very little in the rounding-off of our life's brief tale. For most lives seem to have no definite meaning at all—wherein they differ from dreams. Dreams lead up to some satisfactory conclusion; Life usually leads towards no definite goal—or rather it *seems* to lead nowhere. It is just a long series of "beginnings"—some began happily and ended sadly; others began in tears and ended far less miserably than we had ever dared to hope. There seems to be no link between them except the link of birth and death. A few lives do lead to some definite climax—a climax which gives to them a *raison d'être;* others seem to fade away into the dull monotony of grey everyday, suddenly to cease as inexplicably as they began. All of us die sadder; it is to be questioned if all of us die wiser. Mostly we die *puzzled*—wondering what it was all for and trusting that Death will give us a solution to the enigma which Life seems only to propound. Not everyone sets his feet on the *right* road. Most of us wander, or are thrust, amid a maze of *wrong* ones—the pivot around which we stumble blindly being Faith and God. So very few of us are ever given the chance to live up to our *best.* Our best dies for the most part miserably thwarted. Destiny seems to encourage only weeds, and the Good-in-us is choked until it withers and dies deprived of its proper share of air

and sun. So we run after money and position and social glory. They, at least, seem to us attainable. Righteousness commands no audience; it plays to empty benches every time. Like "Art for Art's sake," it is its own reward, and for the upholder of it there is no State Pension.

Destiny and Hope.

It is always curious to remember the life we thought we were going to have when we were young and the life which Destiny has given us. The one was so happy and wonderful, so full of splendid purpose, so resplendent with the greatness and goodness of our youthful souls; the other is often such a grim, colourless affair. I often wonder if character makes fate or if fate makes character. Perhaps the truth is a compromise between the two. For it would appear that if you have one weak place in your moral and spiritual armour, fate will discover it, and the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune will stab you relentlessly every time. On the other hand, the Divine Good that is within you has to struggle hard to reach the light. Destiny seems to take no friendly interest in that spark of God within each human heart which only needs a chance in order to illuminate and beautify the world. This may be cynical—and so, as I have just declared, a sign of failure. But there is so much good, even in the worst of us, that never has a chance. All the opportunity has been the other way. It is not that the Good-in-us is killed so much as it is not *encouraged*. At last it dies from sheer despair. It is not good for us to have all our wishes granted; on the other hand, hope can be disappointed once too often. It "springs eternally," I know, but at last it becomes little but the slow uplifting of dead-tired eyes. There is the faith of ignorance and there is the faith of des-

pair. The faith of despair is the more common faith, alas! It is the last prayer of the Soul demanding of Fate the right to live. But the great weaver of human lives is generally a cynic, and nearly always deaf. So we can but play our uncongenial parts as best we may until the end. After that?—but what matters after that? All we long for is utter forgetfulness and a thousand years of quiet rest. Fate is often very kind in a strange way. It makes us indifferent to Life—and if Life is hard, what could be kinder than tragedy?

Life's Yesterday.

THERE is, however, a comic irony in the desires of To-day and what we absolutely demanded of Fate Yesterday. When we are young we ask so much. When we are old we discover that to have a good dinner is to have quite a good time. When we were twenty we believed that Happiness was some very definite, almost concrete, thing. We scoffed at the idea of Schopenhauer that Happiness was merely a freedom from pain. Happiness was something so very much more than that then. We demanded the imposible—alas, it did not seem impossible to us in those days!—and nothing less than the impossible would satisfy our yearnings. Now we are old we are more than content with the usual, and hope that the usual will be a state of peace. When we were young we demanded a *grande passion*. We were ready and willing, and secretly longing, to sacrifice all for love. Now we are unutterably flattered if somebody looks at us a second time; and some silly old things are more than content to pay for the illusion. We used to yearn for large houses and money and motor-cars; now we have quite a pleased feeling if we are given a satisfactory portion of lump sugar and a little white bread. Age teaches us to find happiness in very

simple things. I wish, alas, that this philosophy—when we have learnt it—did not find us quite so old. By the time we have really and truly discovered the meaning of contentment we are usually too antiquated to enjoy it. When most of us are ready to die, we have only just mastered the A B C of learning to live. Life is mostly an ironic farce, with the audience laughing and the players hiding their sobs behind a smile. When we are young we seek to mould life on the dictates of the heart; now we are old we have discovered that the heart is often a very treacherous friend and the stomach is a more appreciated comrade at the end. A good digestion can make life very pleasant, even at eighty; whereas the heart deserts us half-way through life, often having landed us in a perfect devil of a fix. The joys of a good dinner are very real joys when we are sixty-five; to eat is about the only "romance" that is left to us. But what a prosaic end of a soul which once demanded the miraculous and the eternal, isn't it?

The Sorrows of Age.

As with Life's joys, so with its sorrows. The sorrows of age are very, very different from the sorrows of the young. Strangely too, whereas the joys of age are far more prosaic and commonplace and realisible than the joys of youth, the sorrows of the old are far deeper, far more beautiful, far more poignant than the sorrows of the young. The things which make youth weep are usually very teeny-weeny things—a disappointing flirtation, a thwarted ambition, a slight, a snub, a social rebuff. When we are young we weep for a hundred things which, when we are old, we can view with complete and quite unstudied indifference. When we are old we realise that in life there is only one deep and very real sorrow, and that is the sorrow

expressed by the little word, "Farewell." Life seems to be one long Good-bye, and Good-byes are the only things which really and truly hurt. I don't mean Good-byes to people — though the farewells of friends and children are the saddest of all farewells; I mean the farewell to those dreams of ours which Time makes us realise at last can never be fulfilled. Oh the hopeless despair of beginning all over again. Sometimes we feel that we can never begin again—that the blankness of disappointment is a blankness which we can never recolour with the hopes and plans of endeavour. It all seems not worth while. Even our little happiness, our little joys, seem wilfully to be taken away from us—and each Farewell finds us a little more tired, a little older, a little more indifferent as to what may happen to-morrow. The vistas of youth's hopes stretch far away into the years. Age looks only at to-morrow, often alas! only at to-day. They are not our declining years which make us feel so incredibly old so much as the long farewells we have had to utter, smiling to hide our tears. There is nothing so ageing as to say Good-bye, nothing which leaves us quite so forlorn and desolate. Yet Life seems to be one long endless farewell, and Fate so often seems to rob us of our flowers merely to give us weeds. And, oh we had lived by, and in, and for the sake of those flowers we had loved and tended through the long, long years! They have left us; we are alone—and Hope is sometimes such a sign of desolation.

Loneliness.

We live our lives among others—and yet how extraordinarily lonely each one of us lives. Perhaps, were it not so, we should have no need of God. God is only really God to the very lonely—the rest have no need of

His consolation. Thus, if there really be a God, the loneliness and sadness of most men's lives becomes explicable. Life is an education—a terrible education—and the knowledge to be learnt from it is the knowledge which is God. There is no other explanation possible for the sorrow and suffering and silent weeping of the world. As the hedgerow becomes stronger for being cut, so, perhaps, the human soul grows whiter through its tears. I know that it is the popular thing to write about Life as if Life were some fine experience, hiding a huge joke. It makes cheerful reading. To talk about Life as " a disappointment " is as if one talked about Death as " a release," as if, indeed, one talked about Death at all—which is always considered bad form. But Life is cheerful for very few people—if they be really honest. It is a joke, maybe, for those who don't suffer, it is Hell for those who do. There is a beauty—a wonderful beauty—hidden in the human heart, but it is not the beauty of happiness and youth; it is the beauty of silent courage, of hope in disappointment, of the goodness which has never had the chance to declare itself, of the piteous loneliness which cries aloud for understanding and companionship. Sympathy is the only key by which to discover this human beauty in life. Sympathy can accomplish all things.

Religion and the Heroic Dead.

I HAVE just read a little book on religion as it is practised at the Front—the *real* religion, I mean, *not* the dogmatic religion of pronounced creeds. It is written by an army chaplain. He has been at the front among the men, and so has authority to speak upon the growth of religious feeling due to the stress of war. He has *helped to comfort men*, and to me that seems nearer to the spirit of Christ than three years of intercession services—which, personally, always strike me

as being a somewhat insulting form of worship, presupposing that if we shriek loud enough and long enough we can make God change His mind, and so put an end to the war. But then, I have never quite understood the soul of those of the faithful who still insist that God has a hand in it at all. Of course, if you grant the belief that God is necessarily all-powerful—then He, of course, must have fired the first shot, and, consequently, the God of Love and the God of Anger become hopelessly mixed up. But then I cannot conceive of a God becoming so human and so petty as to be angry at all. If we are going to be furious at the thought of war, let us be furious with *ourselves*. It is *we* who made this war possible, and God had nothing whatever to do with it—*could not have had if He be really God*. It would be better to leave God out of it altogether. It is mankind who has made war; it is mankind alone who will make all future wars impossible. To purge the earth of all those "influences" which make for the conquering and subjection of the weaker nations—*that* to my mind *is the will of God*, and we alone can fulfil it. God gave to man the power to think and reflect. That man has not used that power rightly is surely not God's fault! On our own heads the blame lies; in our own hands is also the rectification. Action is far more efficacious than prayer (not so universally popular, of course, since it is far more difficult). Action is the finest prayer of all. It is easier to cry, "Lord, save my soul," than to go out into the world and be a better man. That is why you see the picture of millions of people on their knees and comparatively few men striving to live the will of their God in the marketplace.

God was dead; Now He Liveth.

The truth of course is that in the souls of most men and women God is merely a person, whereas God in

reality is a philosophy. But the world infinitely prefers The Figure. It mixes up God with power and might and the authority to grant passports to Paradise. It finds it so much easier to fight for a person than for an ideal. Emperors and archbishops are but the personified gratification of a world which demands some living figure to rally round. I have just had rather a reproachful letter from a reader concerning my intense indifference to the words of our National Anthem. But then I am so mentally constructed that I can find no inspiration towards heroic acts in a cry to God to save the King—though I certainly wish King George nothing but the best of good fortune. It is that I realise that the King is but the human symbol of a far greater and more inspiring truth—and I prefer the truth to the symbol. For honestly, I believe that the number of soldiers who go into battle in defence of their king is infinitesimal. The majority go to face death for something deeper, far nobler, far more humanly vital than any king. This "something" is for the most part inarticulate. You rarely hear it spoken of; it is unsung and unseen. Unseen—did I say? No, it is not unseen. It is seen in every act of unselfish heroism, in every human act of kindness on the battlefield, in every one of those thoughts and acts which reveal to each man the glory of his human brotherhood. They die—not knowing why they die, but they die, or risk death, in defence of some inarticulate ideal which few people have ever explained to them, though many have given them a wrong explanation. This ideal is great enough, holy enough, to make death worth while. It is not for God—as they have been taught to know God; it is not for the king, as they have heard and known kings; it is not entirely for their country, as that country has been helpful to them. No, it is for something which the Church stammers pompously to explain, which politicians

stammer more pompously and explain even less clearly, but which men—most of them—know themselves through some divine intuition which belongs to all humanity. It has no figure, no dogma, and no symbol—but the symbol of self-sacrifice, which is the greatest faith as well as the greatest prayer in the world.

The Blind Ignorance of Those who Lead.

If God really lived in men's hearts we should have no need of kings and archbishops—except, of course, from a purely utilitarian standpoint. They would possess no glamour. But God has been dead—or, rather, in a state of coma—these long years. And in His unconsciousness the false values have flourished exceedingly. We have grown to believe that the bishop's robes are nearer to Heaven than the rags of the lowly. We have gone to war for all sorts of idiotic political purposes in defence of and for the honour of all kinds of idiotic ideals. God has had His G.H.Q., His generals and captains, His sergeant-majors and His lance-jacks. The symbolic mansion of Heaven on earth has been full of ranks, and "castes," and fashionable gatherings. Even in this war—this war in which God has reawakened in men's hearts—He has awoke to find that his ministering angels are wearing officer's uniform and stars!

The Army Chaplain.

I think it is a truism that the good the Church has done in this war has been due, not to the Church as she is found upon earth, but to the chaplains themselves—individually. Christ could have no truck with that army of bishops, and archbishops, and deans, and officer-chaplains, because by their very self-honouring

in the human brotherhood they lie against both His teaching and His life. God, Who was dead in the days of Peace, is alive to-day, and the Church, which flourished while the real God slept in men's souls, is so "dead" that I see no resurrection for it in its present state at all, for it took, as we are all inclined to take when things are easy, the sham for the real the gilding for the gold, the symbol for the great Reality. It is pitiful to me to see at this time of day the Church struggling with its million services, its æsthetic ritual, its Bible-readings, its sometimes unctuous—nearly always obsequious—prayers. The world of men and women is crying aloud for sympathy, and understanding, and enlightenment. The old pomps and rituals are still good enough for many of us at home who sit and "wonder when this awful war will end," and feel ourselves immensely religious when we look upon the death and suffering of other people as atonement for our and their sins. But one day, sooner or later, the soldiers will come home—millions of them. They will come home bigger men, deeper men, finer men. What religion will the Church have to offer these men? The same old dogma, the same old symbols, the same old dead and often foolish faith? They will laugh at it! For they will have seen the hell that men, this fine product of a Church's instruction in Christian doctrine, can do. They will *know* what real Christianity means, even though they may not be able to write the articles of their Divine Faith. They will silently look to the Church to formulate some great teaching which will make another war utterly impossible, and they will not be satisfied if all they hear is a droned prayer once a week to Heaven to "give peace in *our* time, O Lord!" They will look towards the Church to sweep away boldly all those foolish tarriddles in the Bible which no thinking person ever believed. They were always ridiculously comic when uttered as examples

of Divine Truth. They will look for new religious standards, a great realisation of what God and Christianity really mean, a simpler, less dogma-stifled faith, a humbler, deeper, more forgiving, universal love. And if they do not find it—they will go their way and *God will be with them.* It is absurd for us to pretend to believe some of the things we do. Worse, it is *wicked*—since there is no sin so great as a lie given to our most profound belief. The author of "Thoughts of Religion at the Front" sees this, too—for he has been into the hell of war, and is not afraid of declaring that he found God there in the heart of the lowly, ordinary man more clearly expressed than he had ever found it at home among the priests of his Church. "Some things are clear," he writes. "First, the Church has to acknowledge that she is not the kingdom of God, but the means to it as an end. There are, I think, a great many carts and horses to be changed round into their right relations—all the whole apparatus of religion have come to be looked upon as ends in themselves, whereas they are means to an end beyond themselves. People think that the clergy's one concern is the success of ecclesiastical activities and institutions. We clergy think so ourselves! It is not for her own interests, which are by themselves incurably too small to evoke the heroic in men, that the Church is in the world. She is in the world to change the world, so that its whole extent may be filled with the glory of God, and may become worthy of the eternal destiny of the souls of men. Hers is a high and costly venture. She has strongholds to storm—the entrenchments where the forces of private-mindedness and apathy and money-worship are dug in. In the attempt she can exhaust to its depths the capacity which is in men for dauntless sacrifice. Secondly, if the Church's conception of her own interests must be changed, so must

the individual's conception of personal religion. Self-preoccupation is as fatal to the latter as to the former. Personal piety is travestied by being thought to be a respectable prudence here for the sake of a reward hereafter. It is not a careful self-salvation at all. Rather it is a salvation from self. It is the being lost to self in devotion and service to God and one's fellow-men."

The Chaplain's Conclusions.

It is to men like the author of "Thoughts on Religion at the Front" that the Church will look for guidance and help in the future. They are men who have been "out there," have seen and endured and understood. They have gone in their officer uniforms, their stars, in all the glamour of representing a kind of national recognition of God. And many have come back humbler, and all have come back wiser. For the God they took out with them to put before the men who were to face death in the midst of life and health and youth was not the God that these man wanted. That God was the God symbolised in forced church parades, cold, lifeless services, uninspired hymns, and in that grovelling attitude which first of all declares itself to be a miserable sinner, and then demands innumerable blessings. They have found a far greater God than He. They have found the God who voluntarily goes out to save the wounded under fire, who takes the flask of water from his own fever-dried lips to give it to a dying comrade, who risks all to save apparently so little, who gives a third of what he has, and, when needed, gives his all. And this God often strangely resembled his own dear pal, or the men who lived and worked and died with him. He wore no officer's uniform—this minister of this real God—he was just one of themselves, only greater, maybe, nobler, truer,

more inspiring because of his own great, noble, true and inspiring *acts*. And these chaplains will, most of them, bring back this soldier's God to the civilian world—when the war is over. He will not be popular, He will not be orthodox, He will be frowned upon by the Church. But He will be the only true and real God—the God Who has never, never died, Who never will or can die so long as men, in big and in little things, know no greater glory than to give up their lives for a friend. The other God—died long ago. He was but an idol founded on man's fears, and hopes, and pompous self-conceit—after all.

Clergymen.

A FINER type of clergymen must be attracted to the Church. It is scandalous to think that in the hearts of so many of the finest men God ever made there is a sneaking contempt for the men who are His ministers —contempt, the most utterly contemptuous of all, which shows itself in good-natured ridicule. The Church wants fewer services and more *real men*—thinking men. It must scrap so many of its articles of belief and thrust them, in all respect and reverence, into the museum of ancient legends and traditions. Until it throws open the windows of its own soul to truth and logic and reason and common-sense it will continue to attract to itself the present pious army of unthinking women and namby-pamby curates. So the real men and women will live their lives outside, or they will bring to the Church the religion which they themselves have evolved and which, when it is written down, is often enough the religion which the Church is supposed to teach, but which it has almost forgotten. For religion—real religion—resolves itself into but one article of faith—"Do unto thy neighbour what you would he should do unto you." You may glorify that

one article by the beauty of Hope, and Faith, and Charity; but Hope, and Faith, and Charity are but the spiritual interpretation of that one divine injunction. For real religion is an *act;* the faith that begins and ends in lip-devotion can never reach unto Heaven. And every act of unselfishness is a religious act. The Church is far too full of men and women on their knees praying to God to give them some benefit which, so far, He has not considered their due. To kneel is good for us, but let our humility show forth in our acts and not only in our attitudes. Let the priests of the Church go forth to live the lives of men *among men.* Let them meet the same temptations, the same trials, the same ignominy as the lowliest of their sheep. It is among the lowliest that God is most needed; it is in the darkest places that the light of Heaven should strongest glow. Let us cry a truce to the controversy as to whether there are Three Persons in One God or merely One. It really doesn't matter. The only thing that is important is that in the lives of others there is space for a little more happiness, a little more comfort, a little more warmth, a little more light, a greater beauty, a more enduring love.

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